

THE  
NATURAL  
HISTORY  
OF  
RELIGION

## INTRODUCTION

1 As every enquiry, which regards religion, is of the utmost importance, there  
are two questions in particular, which challenge our attention, to wit, that  
concerning its foundation in reason, and that concerning its origin in human  
nature. Happily, the first question, which is the most important, admits of  
the most obvious, at least, the clearest solution. The whole frame of nature  
bespeaks an intelligent author; and no rational enquirer can, after serious  
reflection, suspend his belief a moment with regard to the primary principles  
of genuine Theism and Religion. But the other question, concerning the  
origin of religion in human nature, is exposed to some more difficulty. The  
belief of invisible, intelligent power has been very generally diffused over the  
human race, in all places and in all ages; but it has neither perhaps been so  
universal as to admit of no exception, nor has it been, in any degree, uniform  
in the ideas, which it has suggested. Some nations have been discovered,  
who entertained no sentiments of Religion, if travellers and historians may  
be credited; and no two nations, and scarce any two men, have ever agreed  
precisely in the same sentiments. It would appear, therefore, that this  
preconception springs not from an original instinct or primary impression  
of nature, such as gives rise to self-love, affection between the sexes, love  
of progeny, gratitude, resentment; since every instinct of this kind has  
been found absolutely universal in all nations and ages, and has always a  
precise determinate object, which it inflexibly pursues. The first religious  
principles must be secondary; such as may easily be perverted by various  
accidents and causes, and whose operation too, in some cases, may, by an  
extraordinary concurrence of circumstances, be altogether prevented. What  
those principles are, which give rise to the original belief, and what those  
accidents and causes are, which direct its operation, is the subject of our  
present enquiry.

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## SECTION 1

### That Polytheism Was the Primary Religion of Men

- 1 IT appears to me, that, if we consider the improvement of human society, from rude beginnings to a state of greater perfection, polytheism or idolatry was, and necessarily must have been, the first and most ancient religion of mankind. This opinion I shall endeavour to confirm by the following arguments.
- 2 It is a matter of fact incontestable, that about 1700 years ago all mankind were polytheists. The doubtful and sceptical principles of a few philosophers, or the theism, and that too not entirely pure, of one or two nations, form no objection worth regarding. Behold then the clear testimony of history. The farther we mount up into antiquity, the more do we find mankind plunged into polytheism. No marks, no symptoms of any more perfect religion. The most ancient records of human race still present us with that system as the popular and established creed. The north, the south, the east, the west, give their unanimous testimony to the same fact. What can be opposed to so full an evidence?10
- 3 As far as writing or history reaches, mankind, in ancient times, appear universally to have been polytheists. Shall we assert, that, in more ancient times, before the knowledge of letters, or the discovery of any art or science, men entertained the principles of pure theism? That is, while they were ignorant and barbarous, they discovered truth: But fell into error, as soon as they acquired learning and politeness.20
- 4 But in this assertion you not only contradict all appearance of probability, but also our present experience concerning the principles and opinions of barbarous nations. The savage tribes of AMERICA, AFRICA, and ASIA are all idolaters. Not a single exception to this rule. Insomuch, that, were a traveller to transport himself into any unknown region; if he found inhabitants cultivated with arts and sciences, though even upon that supposition there are odds against their being theists, yet could he not safely, till farther enquiry, pronounce any thing on that head: But if he found them ignorant and barbarous, he might before-hand declare them idolaters; and there scarcely is a possibility of his being mistaken.30
- 5 It seems certain, that, according to the natural progress of human thought, the ignorant multitude must first entertain some groveling and

familiar notion of superior powers, before they stretch their conception to that perfect Being, who bestowed order on the whole frame of nature. We may as reasonably imagine, that men inhabited palaces before huts and cottages, or studied geometry before agriculture; as assert that the Deity appeared to them a pure spirit, omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent, before he was apprehended to be a powerful, though limited being, with human passions and appetites, limbs and organs. The mind rises gradually, from inferior to superior: By abstracting from what is imperfect, it forms an idea of perfection: And slowly distinguishing the nobler parts of its own frame from the grosser, it learns to transfer only the former, much elevated and refined, to its divinity. Nothing could disturb this natural progress of thought, but some obvious and invincible argument, which might immediately lead the mind into the pure principles of theism, and make it overleap, at one bound, the vast interval which is interposed between the human and the divine nature. But though I allow, that the order and frame of the universe, when accurately examined, affords such an argument; yet I can never think, that this consideration could have an influence on mankind, when they formed their first rude notions of religion.

- 6 The causes of such objects, as are quite familiar to us, never strike our attention or curiosity; and however extraordinary or surprizing these objects in themselves, they are passed over, by the raw and ignorant multitude, without much examination or enquiry. ADAM, rising at once, in paradise, and in the full perfection of his faculties, would naturally, as represented by MILTON, be astonished at the glorious appearances of nature, the heavens, the air, the earth, his own organs and members; and would be led to ask, whence this wonderful scene arose. But a barbarous, necessitous animal (such as man is on the first origin of society), pressed by such numerous wants and passions, has no leisure to admire the regular face of nature, or make enquiries concerning the cause of those objects, to which, from his infancy, he has been gradually accustomed. On the contrary, the more regular and uniform, that is, the more perfect nature appears, the more is he familiarized to it, and the less inclined to scrutinize and examine it. A monstrous birth excites his curiosity, and is deemed a prodigy. It alarms him from its novelty; and immediately sets him a trembling, and sacrificing, and praying. But an animal, compleat in all its limbs and organs, is to him an ordinary spectacle, and produces no religious opinion or affection. Ask him, whence that animal arose; he will tell you, from the copulation of its parents. And these, whence? From the copulation of theirs. A few removes satisfy his curiosity, and set the objects at such a distance, that he entirely loses sight of them. Imagine not, that he will so much as start the

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question, whence the first animal; much less, whence the whole system or united fabric of the universe arose. Or, if you start such a question to him, expect not, that he will employ his mind with any anxiety about a subject, so remote, so uninteresting, and which so much exceeds the bounds of his capacity.

7 But farther, if men were at first led into the belief of one Supreme Being, by reasoning from the frame of nature, they could never possibly leave that belief, in order to embrace polytheism; but the same principles of reason, which at first produced and diffused over mankind, so magnificent an opinion, must be able, with greater facility, to preserve it. The first invention and proof of any doctrine is much more difficult than the supporting and retaining of it.

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8 There is a great difference between historical facts and speculative opinions; nor is the knowledge of the one propagated in the same manner with that of the other. An historical fact, while it passes by oral tradition from eye-witnesses and contemporaries, is disguised in every successive narration, and may at last retain but very small, if any, resemblance of the original truth, on which it was founded. The frail memories of men, their love of exaggeration, their supine carelessness; these principles, if not corrected by books and writing, soon pervert the account of historical events; where argument or reasoning has little or no place, nor can ever recall the truth, which has once escaped those narrations. It is thus the fables of HERCULES, THESEUS, BACCHUS are supposed to have been originally founded in true history, corrupted by tradition. But with regard to speculative opinions, the case is far otherwise. If these opinions be founded on arguments so clear and obvious as to carry conviction with the generality of mankind, the same arguments, which at first diffused the opinions, will still preserve them in their original purity. If the arguments be more abstruse, and more remote from vulgar apprehension, the opinions will always be confined to a few persons; and as soon as men leave the contemplation of the arguments, the opinions will immediately be lost and be buried in oblivion. Whichever side of this dilemma we take, it must appear impossible, that theism could, from reasoning, have been the primary religion of human race, and have afterwards, by its corruption, given birth to polytheism and to all the various superstitions of the heathen world. Reason, when obvious, prevents these corruptions: When abstruse, it keeps the principles entirely from the knowledge of the vulgar, who are alone liable to corrupt any principle or opinion.

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## SECTION 2

### Origin of Polytheism

- 1 IF we would, therefore, indulge our curiosity, in enquiring concerning the origin of religion, we must turn our thoughts towards polytheism, the primitive religion of uninstructed mankind.
- 2 Were men led into the apprehension of invisible, intelligent power by a contemplation of the works of nature, they could never possibly entertain any conception but of one single being, who bestowed existence and order on this vast machine, and adjusted all its parts, according to one regular plan or connected system. For though, to persons of a certain turn of mind, it may not appear altogether absurd, that several independent beings, endowed with superior wisdom, might conspire in the contrivance and execution of one regular plan; yet is this a merely arbitrary supposition, which, even if allowed possible, must be confessed neither to be supported by probability nor necessity. All things in the universe are evidently of a piece. Every thing is adjusted to every thing. One design prevails throughout the whole. And this uniformity leads the mind to acknowledge one author; because the conception of different authors, without any distinction of attributes or operations, serves only to give perplexity to the imagination, without bestowing any satisfaction on the understanding. The statue of LAOCOON, as we learn from PLINY, was the work of three artists: But it is certain, that, were we not told so, we should never have imagined, that a groupe of figures, cut from one stone, and united in one plan, was not the work and contrivance of one statuary. To ascribe any single effect to the combination of several causes, is not surely a natural and obvious supposition.  
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- 3 On the other hand, if, leaving the works of nature, we trace the footsteps of invisible power in the various and contrary events of human life, we are necessarily led into polytheism and to the acknowledgment of several limited and imperfect deities. Storms and tempests ruin what is nourished by the sun. The sun destroys what is fostered by the moisture of dews and rains. War may be favourable to a nation, whom the inclemency of the seasons afflicts with famine. Sickness and pestilence may depopulate a kingdom, amidst the most profuse plenty. The same nation is not, at the same time, equally successful by sea and by land. And a nation, which now triumphs over its enemies, may anon submit to their more prosperous arms. In short,  
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the conduct of events, or what we call the plan of a particular providence, is so full of variety and uncertainty, that, if we suppose it immediately ordered by any intelligent beings, we must acknowledge a contrariety in their designs and intentions, a constant combat of opposite powers, and a repentance or change of intention in the same power, from impotence or levity. Each nation has its tutelar deity. Each element is subjected to its invisible power or agent. The province of each god is separate from that of another. Nor are the operations of the same god always certain and invariable. To-day he protects: To-morrow he abandons us. Prayers and sacrifices, rites and ceremonies, well or ill performed, are the sources of his favour or enmity, and produce all the good or ill fortune, which are to be found amongst mankind.

4 We may conclude, therefore, that, in all nations, which have embraced polytheism, the first ideas of religion arose not from a contemplation of the works of nature, but from a concern with regard to the events of life, and from the incessant hopes and fears, which actuate the human mind. Accordingly, we find, that all idolaters, having separated the provinces of their deities, have recourse to that invisible agent, to whose authority they are immediately subjected, and whose province it is to superintend that course of actions, in which they are, at any time, engaged. JUNO is invoked at marriages; LUCINA at births. NEPTUNE receives the prayers of seamen; and MARS of warriors. The husbandman cultivates his field under the protection of CERES; and the merchant acknowledges the authority of MERCURY. Each natural event is supposed to be governed by some intelligent agent; and nothing prosperous or adverse can happen in life, which may not be the subject of peculiar prayers or thanksgivings.<sup>1</sup>

5 It must necessarily, indeed, be allowed, that, in order to carry men's attention beyond the present course of things, or lead them into any inference concerning invisible intelligent power, they must be actuated by some passion, which prompts their thought and reflection; some motive, which urges their first enquiry. But what passion shall we here have recourse to, for explaining an effect of such mighty consequence? Not speculative curiosity surely, or the pure love of truth. That motive is too refined for such gross apprehensions; and would lead men into enquiries concerning

<sup>1</sup> "Fragilis & laboriosa mortalitas in partes ista digessit, infirmitatis suæ memor, ut portionibus quisquis coleret, quo maxime indigeret." PLIN. lib. 2. cap. 7. So early as HESIOD's time there were 30,000 deities. OPERA & DIES, lib. 1. ver. 252. But the task to be performed by these seems still too great for their number. The provinces of the deities were so subdivided, that there was even a god of *Sneezing*. See ARIST. PROBL. SECTION 33. CAP. 7. The province of copulation, suitably to the importance and dignity of it, was divided among several deities.

the frame of nature, a subject too large and comprehensive for their narrow capacities. No passions, therefore, can be supposed to work upon such barbarians, but the ordinary affections of human life; the anxious concern for happiness, the dread of future misery, the terror of death, the thirst of revenge, the appetite for food and other necessaries. Agitated by hopes and fears of this nature, especially the latter, men scrutinize, with a trembling curiosity, the course of future causes, and examine the various and contrary events of human life. And in this disordered scene, with eyes still more disordered and astonished, they see the first obscure traces of divinity.

## SECTION 3

### The Same Subject Continued

1 WE are placed in this world, as in a great theatre, where the true springs and causes of every event are entirely concealed from us; nor have we either sufficient wisdom to foresee, or power to prevent those ills, with which we are continually threatened. We hang in perpetual suspence between life and death, health and sickness, plenty and want; which are distributed among the human species by secret and unknown causes, whose operation is oft unexpected, and always unaccountable. These *unknown causes*, then, become the constant object of our hope and fear; and while the passions are kept in perpetual alarm by an anxious expectation of the events, the imagination is equally employed in forming ideas of those powers, on which we have so entire a dependence. Could men anatomize nature, according to the most probable, at least the most intelligible philosophy, they would find, that these causes are nothing but the particular fabric and structure of the minute parts of their own bodies and of external objects; and that, by a regular and constant machinery, all the events are produced, about which they are so much concerned. But this philosophy exceeds the comprehension of the ignorant multitude, who can only conceive the *unknown causes* in a general and confused manner; though their imagination, perpetually employed on the same subject, must labour to form some particular and distinct idea of them. The more they consider these causes themselves, and the uncertainty of their operation, the less satisfaction do they meet with in their researches; and, however unwilling, they must at last have abandoned so arduous an attempt, were it not for a propensity in human nature, which leads into a system, that gives them some satisfaction.

2 There is an universal tendency among mankind to conceive all beings like themselves, and to transfer to every object, those qualities, with which they are familiarly acquainted, and of which they are intimately conscious. We find human faces in the moon, armies in the clouds; and by a natural propensity, if not corrected by experience and reflection, ascribe malice or good-will to every thing, that hurts or pleases us. Hence the frequency and beauty of the *prosopopœia* in poetry; where trees, mountains and streams are personified, and the inanimate parts of nature acquire sentiment and passion. And though these poetical figures and expressions gain not on

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the belief, they may serve, at least, to prove a certain tendency in the imagination, without which they could neither be beautiful nor natural. Nor is a river-god or hamadryad always taken for a mere poetical or imaginary personage; but may sometimes enter into the real creed of the ignorant vulgar; while each grove or field is represented as possessed of a particular *genius* or invisible power, which inhabits and protects it. Nay, philosophers cannot entirely exempt themselves from this natural frailty; but have oft ascribed to inanimate matter the horror of a *vacuum*, sympathies, antipathies, and other affections of human nature. The absurdity is not less, while we cast our eyes upwards; and transferring, as is too usual, human passions and infirmities to the deity, represent him as jealous and revengeful, capricious and partial, and, in short, a wicked and foolish man, in every respect but his superior power and authority. No wonder, then, that mankind, being placed in such an absolute ignorance of causes, and being at the same time so anxious concerning their future fortune, should immediately acknowledge a dependence on invisible powers, possessed of sentiment and intelligence. The *unknown causes*, which continually employ their thought, appearing always in the same aspect, are all apprehended to be of the same kind or species. Nor is it long before we ascribe to them thought and reason and passion, and sometimes even the limbs and figures of men, in order to bring them nearer to a resemblance with ourselves.

- 3 In proportion as any man's course of life is governed by accident, we always find, that he encreases in superstition; as may particularly be observed of gamesters and sailors, who, though, of all mankind, the least capable of serious reflection, abound most in frivolous and superstitious apprehensions. The gods, says CORIOLANUS in DIONYSIUS,<sup>2</sup> have an influence in every affair; but above all, in war; where the event is so uncertain. All human life, especially before the institution of order and good government, being subject to fortuitous accidents; it is natural, that superstition should prevail every where in barbarous ages, and put men on the most earnest enquiry concerning those invisible powers, who dispose of their happiness or misery. Ignorant of astronomy and the anatomy of plants and animals, and too little curious to observe the admirable adjustment of final causes; they remain still unacquainted with a first and Supreme Creator, and with that infinitely perfect spirit, who alone, by his almighty will, bestowed order on the whole frame of nature. Such a magnificent idea is too big for their narrow conceptions, which can neither observe the beauty of the work, nor comprehend the grandeur of its author. They suppose their deities,

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<sup>2</sup> Lib. 8.

however potent and invisible, to be nothing but a species of human creatures, perhaps raised from among mankind, and retaining all human passions and appetites, together with corporeal limbs and organs. Such limited beings, though masters of human fate, being, each of them, incapable of extending his influence every where, must be vastly multiplied, in order to answer that variety of events, which happen over the whole face of nature. Thus every place is stored with a crowd of local deities; and thus polytheism has prevailed, and still prevails, among the greatest part of uninstructed mankind.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Any of the human affections may lead us into the notion of invisible, intelligent power; hope as well as fear, gratitude as well as affliction: But if we examine our own hearts, or observe what passes around us, we shall find, that men are much oftener thrown on their knees by the melancholy than by the agreeable passions. Prosperity is easily received as our due, and few questions are asked concerning its cause or author. It begets cheerfulness and activity and alacrity and a lively enjoyment of every social and sensual pleasure: And during this state of mind, men have little leisure or inclination to think of the unknown invisible regions. On the other hand, every disastrous accident alarms us, and sets us on enquiries concerning the principles whence it arose: Apprehensions spring up with regard to futurity: And the mind, sunk into diffidence, terror, and melancholy, has recourse to every method of appeasing those secret intelligent powers, on whom our fortune is supposed entirely to depend.

<sup>5</sup> No topic is more usual with all popular divines than to display the advantages of affliction, in bringing men to a due sense of religion; by subduing their confidence and sensuality, which, in times of prosperity, make them forgetful of a divine providence. Nor is this topic confined merely to modern religions. The ancients have also employed it. "Fortune has never liberally, without envy," says a GREEK historian,<sup>4</sup> "bestowed an

<sup>3</sup> The following lines of EURIPIDES are so much to the present purpose, that I cannot forbear quoting them:

Οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν πιστόν, οὔτ' εὐδοξία,  
Οὔτ' αὖ καλῶς πράσσοντα μὴ πράξειν κακῶς.  
Φύροισι δ' αὖθ' οἱ θεοὶ πάλιν τε καὶ πρόσω,  
Ταραγμὸν ἐντιθέντες, ως ἀγνωσίᾳ  
Σέβωμεν αὐτούς.

HECUBA.

"There is nothing secure in the world; no glory, no prosperity. The gods toss all life into confusion; mix every thing with its reverse; that all of us, from our ignorance and uncertainty, may pay them the more worship and reverence."

<sup>4</sup> DIOD. SIC. lib. 3.

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unmixed happiness on mankind; but with all her gifts has ever conjoined some disastrous circumstance, in order to chastize men into a reverence for the gods, whom, in a continued course of prosperity, they are apt to neglect and forget."

6 What age or period of life is the most addicted to superstition? The weakest and most timid. What sex? The same answer must be given. "The leaders and examples of every kind of superstition," says STRABO,<sup>5</sup> "are the women. These excite the men to devotion and supplications, and the observance of religious days. It is rare to meet with one that lives apart from the females, and yet is addicted to such practices. And nothing can, for this reason, be more improbable, than the account given of an order of men among the GETES, who practiced celibacy, and were notwithstanding the most religious fanatics." A method of reasoning, which would lead us to entertain a bad idea of the devotion of monks; did we not know by an experience, not so common, perhaps, in STRABO's days, that one may practice celibacy, and profess chastity; and yet maintain the closest connexions and most entire sympathy with that timorous and pious sex.

<sup>5</sup> Lib. 7.

## SECTION 4

### Deities Not Considered as Creators or Formers of the World

- 1 THE only point of theology, in which we shall find a consent of mankind almost universal, is, that there is invisible, intelligent power in the world: But whether this power be supreme or subordinate, whether confined to one being, or distributed among several, what attributes, qualities, connexions, or principles of action ought to be ascribed to those beings; concerning all these points, there is the widest difference in the popular systems of theology. Our ancestors in EUROPE, before the revival of letters, believed, as we do at present, that there was one supreme God, the author of nature, whose power, though in itself uncontrollable, was yet often exerted by the interposition of his angels and subordinate ministers, who executed his sacred purposes. But they also believed, that all nature was full of other invisible powers; fairies, goblins, elves, sprights; beings, stronger and mightier than men, but much inferior to the celestial natures, who surround the throne of God. Now, suppose, that any one, in those ages, had denied the existence of God and of his angels; would not his impiety justly have deserved the appellation of *atheism*, even though he had still allowed, by some odd capricious reasoning, that the popular stories of elves and fairies were just and well-grounded? The difference, on the one hand, between such a person and a genuine theist is infinitely greater than that, on the other, between him and one that absolutely excludes all invisible intelligent power. And it is a fallacy, merely from the casual resemblance of names, without any conformity of meaning, to rank such opposite opinions under the same denomination.
- 2 To any one, who considers justly of the matter, it will appear, that the gods of all polytheists are no better than the elves or fairies of our ancestors, and merit as little any pious worship or veneration. These pretended religionists are really a kind of superstitious atheists, and acknowledge no being, that corresponds to our idea of a deity. No first principle of mind or thought: No supreme government and administration: No divine contrivance or intention in the fabric of the world.

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3 The CHINESE, when<sup>6</sup> their prayers are not answered, beat their idols. The deities of the LAPLANDERS are any large stone which they meet with of an extraordinary shape.<sup>7</sup> The EGYPTIAN mythologists, in order to account for animal worship, said, that the gods, pursued by the violence of earth-born men, who were their enemies, had formerly been obliged to disguise themselves under the semblance of beasts.<sup>8</sup> The CAUNII, a nation in the Lesser ASIA, resolving to admit no strange gods among them, regularly, at certain seasons, assembled themselves compleatly armed, beat the air with their lances, and proceeded in that manner to their frontiers; in order, as they said, to expel the foreign deities.<sup>9</sup> "Not even the immortal gods," said some GERMAN nations to CÆSAR, "are a match for the SUEVI."<sup>10</sup>

4 Many ills, says DIOMEDE in HOMER to VENUS wounded by DIOMEDE, many ills, my daughter, have the gods inflicted on men: And many ills, in return, have men inflicted on the gods.<sup>11</sup> We need but open any classic author to meet with these gross representations of the deities; and LONGINUS<sup>12</sup> with reason observes, that such ideas of the divine nature, if literally taken, contain a true atheism.

5 Some writers<sup>13</sup> have been surprized, that the impieties of ARISTOPHANES should have been tolerated, nay publicly acted and applauded by the ATHENIANS; a people so superstitious and so jealous of the public religion, that, at that very time, they put SOCRATES to death for his imagined incredulity. But these writers do not consider, that the ludicrous, familiar images, under which the gods are represented by that comic poet, instead of appearing impious, were the genuine lights, in which the ancients conceived their divinities. What conduct can be more criminal or mean, than that of JUPITER in the AMPHITRYON? Yet that play, which represented his gallante exploits, was supposed so agreeable to him, that it was always acted in ROME by public authority, when the state was threatened with pestilence, famine, or any general calamity.<sup>14</sup> The ROMANS supposed, that, like all old letchers, he would be highly pleased with the recital of his former feats of prowess and vigour, and that no topic was so proper, upon which to flatter his vanity.

6 The LACEDEMONIANS, says XENOPHON,<sup>15</sup> always, during war, put up their petitions very early in the morning, in order to be before-hand with their enemies, and, by being the first solicitors, pre-engage the gods in their

<sup>6</sup> Père LE COMTE.      <sup>7</sup> REGNARD, Voyage de LAPONIE.

<sup>8</sup> DIOD. Sic. lib. 1. LUCIAN. de sacrificiis. OVID alludes to the same tradition, Metam. lib. 5. l. 321. So also MANILIUS, lib. 4.

<sup>9</sup> HERODOT. lib. 1.      <sup>10</sup> CÆS. Comment. de bello Gallico, lib. 4.      <sup>11</sup> Lib. 5. 381.

<sup>12</sup> Cap. 9.      <sup>13</sup> Père BRUMOY, Théâtre des GRECS; & FONTENELLE, Histoire des oracles.

<sup>14</sup> ARNOB. lib. 7.      <sup>15</sup> De LACED. rep.

favour. We may gather from SENECA,<sup>16</sup> that it was usual, for the votaries in the temples, to make interest with the beadle or sexton, that they might have a seat near the image of the deity, in order to be the best heard in their prayers and applications to him. The TYRIANS, when besieged by ALEXANDER, threw chains on the statue of HERCULES, to prevent that deity from deserting to the enemy.<sup>17</sup> AUGUSTUS, having twice lost his fleet by storms, forbade NEPTUNE to be carried in procession along with the other gods; and fancied, that he had sufficiently revenged himself by that expedient.<sup>18</sup> After GERMANICUS's death, the people were so enraged at their gods, that they stoned them in their temples; and openly renounced all allegiance to them.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> To ascribe the origin and fabric of the universe to these imperfect beings never enters into the imagination of any polytheist or idolater. HESIOD, whose writings, with those of HOMER, contained the canonical system of the heathens,<sup>20</sup> HESIOD, I say, supposes gods and men to have sprung equally from the unknown powers of nature.<sup>21</sup> And throughout the whole theogony of that author, PANDORA is the only instance of creation or a voluntary production; and she too was formed by the gods merely from despight to PROMETHEUS, who had furnished men with stolen fire from the celestial regions.<sup>22</sup> The ancient mythologists, indeed, seem throughout to have rather embraced the idea of generation than that of creation or formation; and to have thence accounted for the origin of this universe.

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<sup>8</sup> OVID, who lived in a learned age, and had been instructed by philosophers in the principles of a divine creation or formation of the world; finding, that such an idea would not agree with the popular mythology, which he delivers, leaves it, in a manner, loose and detached from his system. "Quisquis fuit ille Deorum?"<sup>23</sup> Whichever of the gods it was, says he, that dissipated the chaos, and introduced order into the universe. It could neither be SATURN, he knew, nor JUPITER, nor NEPTUNE, nor any of the received deities of paganism. His theological system had taught him nothing upon that head; and he leaves the matter equally undetermined.

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<sup>9</sup> DIODORUS SICULUS,<sup>24</sup> beginning his work with an enumeration of the most reasonable opinions concerning the origin of the world, makes no mention of a deity or intelligent mind; though it is evident from his history, that he was much more prone to superstition than to irreligion.

<sup>16</sup> Epist. 41.      <sup>17</sup> QUINT. CURTIUS, lib. 4. cap. 3. DIOD. SIC. lib. 17.

<sup>18</sup> SUETON. in vita AUG. cap. 16.      <sup>19</sup> Id. in vita CAL. cap. 5.

<sup>20</sup> HERODOT. lib. 2. LUCIAN. JUPITER confutatus, de luctu, SATURN. &c.

<sup>21</sup> Ως όμοθεν γεγάσαι θεοὶ θυητοί τ' ἀνθρωποι. HESIOD, Opera & dies, l. 108.

<sup>22</sup> Theog. l. 570.      <sup>23</sup> Metamorph. lib. 1. l. 32.      <sup>24</sup> Lib. 1.

And in another passage,<sup>25</sup> talking of the ICHTHYOPHAGI, a nation in INDIA, he says, that, there being so great difficulty in accounting for their descent, we must conclude them to be *aborigines*, without any beginning of their generation, propagating their race from all eternity; as some of the physiologists, in treating of the origin of nature, have justly observed. "But in such subjects as these," adds the historian, "which exceed all human capacity, it may well happen, that those, who discourse the most, know the least; reaching a specious appearance of truth in their reasonings, while extremely wide of the real truth and matter of fact."

- 10 A strange sentiment in our eyes, to be embraced by a professed and zealous religionist!<sup>26</sup> But it was merely by accident, that the question concerning the origin of the world did ever in ancient times enter into religious systems, or was treated of by theologers. The philosophers alone made profession of delivering systems of this kind; and it was pretty late too before these bethought themselves of having recourse to a mind or supreme intelligence, as the first cause of all. So far was it from being esteemed profane in those days to account for the origin of things without a deity, that THALES, ANAXIMENES, HERACLITUS, and others, who embraced that system of cosmogony, passed unquestioned; while ANAXAGORAS, the first undoubted theist among the philosophers, was perhaps the first that ever was accused of atheism.<sup>27</sup>

- 11 We are told by SEXTUS EMPIRICUS,<sup>28</sup> that EPICURUS, when a boy, reading with his preceptor these verses of HESIOD,

Eldest of beings, *chaos* first arose;  
Next *earth*, wide-stretch'd, the *seat* of all.

<sup>25</sup> Id. *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> The same author, who can thus account for the origin of the world without a Deity, esteems it impious to explain from physical causes, the common accidents of life, earthquakes, inundations, and tempests; and devoutly ascribes these to the anger of JUPITER or NEPTUNE. A plain proof, whence he derived his ideas of religion. See lib. 15. p. 364. ex edit. RHODOMANNI.

<sup>27</sup> It will be easy to give a reason, why THALES, ANAXIMANDER, and those early philosophers, who really were atheists, might be very orthodox in the pagan creed; and why ANAXAGORAS and SOCRATES, though real theists, must naturally, in ancient times, be esteemed impious. The blind, unguided powers of nature, if they could produce men, might also produce such beings as JUPITER and NEPTUNE, who being the most powerful, intelligent existences in the world, would be proper objects of worship. But where a supreme intelligence, the first cause of all, is admitted, these capricious beings, if they exist at all, must appear very subordinate and dependent, and consequently be excluded from the rank of deities. PLATO (*de leg.* lib. 10.) assigns this reason for the imputation thrown on ANAXAGORAS, namely his denying the divinity of the stars, planets, and other created objects.

<sup>28</sup> *Adversus mathem.* lib. 10.

The young scholar first betrayed his inquisitive genius, by asking, "And chaos whence?" but was told by his preceptor, that he must have recourse to the philosophers for a solution of such questions. And from this hint EPICURUS left philology and all other studies, in order to betake himself to that science, whence alone he expected satisfaction with regard to these sublime subjects.

12 The common people were never likely to push their researches so far, or derive from reasoning their systems of religion; when philologists and mythologists, we see, scarcely ever discovered so much penetration. And even the philosophers, who discoursed of such topics, readily assented to the grossest theory, and admitted the joint origin of gods and men from night and chaos; from fire, water, air, or whatever they established to be the ruling element.

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13 Nor was it only on their first origin, that the gods were supposed dependent on the powers of nature. Throughout the whole period of their existence they were subjected to the dominion of fate or destiny. "Think of the force of necessity," says AGRIPPA to the ROMAN people, "that force, to which even the gods must submit."<sup>29</sup> And the Younger PLINY,<sup>30</sup> agreeably to this way of thinking, tells us, that amidst the darkness, horror, and confusion, which ensued upon the first eruption of VESUVIUS, several concluded, that all nature was going to wrack, and that gods and men were perishing in one common ruin.

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14 It is great complaisance, indeed, if we dignify with the name of religion such an imperfect system of theology, and put it on a level with later systems, which are founded on principles more just and more sublime. For my part, I can scarcely allow the principles even of MARCUS AURELIUS, PLUTARCH, and some other STOICS and ACADEMICS, though much more refined than the pagan superstition, to be worthy of the honourable appellation of *theism*. For if the mythology of the heathens resemble the ancient EUROPEAN system of spiritual beings, excluding God and angels, and leaving only fairies and sprights; the creed of these philosophers may justly be said to exclude a deity, and to leave only angels and fairies.

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<sup>29</sup> DIONYS. HALIC. lib. 6.

<sup>30</sup> Epist. lib. 6.

## SECTION 5

### Various Forms of Polytheism: Allegory, Hero-Worship

- 1 BUT it is chiefly our present business to consider the gross polytheism of the vulgar, and to trace all its various appearances, in the principles of human nature, whence they are derived.
- 2 Whoever learns by argument, the existence of invisible intelligent power, must reason from the admirable contrivance of natural objects, and must suppose the world to be the workmanship of that divine being, the original cause of all things. But the vulgar polytheist, so far from admitting that idea, deifies every part of the universe, and conceives all the conspicuous productions of nature, to be themselves so many real divinities. The sun, moon, and stars, are all gods according to his system: Fountains are inhabited by nymphs, and trees by hamadryads: Even monkies, dogs, cats, and other animals often become sacred in his eyes, and strike him with a religious veneration. And thus, however strong men's propensity to believe invisible, intelligent power in nature, their propensity is equally strong to rest their attention on sensible, visible objects; and in order to reconcile these opposite inclinations, they are led to unite the invisible power with some visible object.  
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- 3 The distribution also of distinct provinces to the several deities is apt to cause some allegory, both physical and moral, to enter into the vulgar systems of polytheism. The god of war will naturally be represented as furious, cruel, and impetuous: The god of poetry as elegant, polite, and amiable: The god of merchandize, especially in early times, as thievish and deceitful. The allegories, supposed in HOMER and other mythologists, I allow, have often been so strained, that men of sense are apt entirely to reject them, and to consider them as the production merely of the fancy and conceit of critics and commentators. But that allegory really has place in the heathen mythology is undeniable even on the least reflection. CUPID the son of VENUS; the Muses the daughters of Memory; PROMETHEUS, the wise brother, and EPIMETHEUS the foolish; HYGIEIA or the goddess of health descended from ÆSCULAPIUS or the god of physic: Who sees not, in these, and in many other instances, the plain traces of allegory? When a god is supposed to preside over any passion, event, or system of actions, it is almost  
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unavoidable to give him a genealogy, attributes, and adventures, suitable to his supposed powers and influence; and to carry on that similitude and comparison, which is naturally so agreeable to the mind of man.

4 Allegories, indeed, entirely perfect, we ought not to expect as the productions of ignorance and superstition; there being no work of genius, that requires a nicer hand, or has been more rarely executed with success. That *Fear* and *Terror* are the sons of MARS is just; but why by VENUS?<sup>31</sup> That *Harmony* is the daughter of VENUS is regular; but why by MARS?<sup>32</sup> That *Sleep* is the brother of *Death* is suitable; but why describe him as enamoured of one of the Graces?<sup>33</sup> And since the ancient mythologists fall into mistakes so gross and palpable, we have no reason surely to expect such refined and longspun allegories, as some have endeavoured to deduce from their fictions.

5 LUCRETIUS was plainly seduced by the strong appearance of allegory, which is observable in the pagan fictions. He first addresses himself to VENUS as to that generating power, which animates, renews, and beautifies the universe: But is soon betrayed by the mythology into incoherencies, while he prays to that allegorical personage to appease the furies of her lover MARS: An idea not drawn from allegory, but from the popular religion, and which LUCRETIUS, as an EPICUREAN, could not consistently admit of.

6 The deities of the vulgar are so little superior to human creatures, that, where men are affected with strong sentiments of veneration or gratitude for any hero or public benefactor, nothing can be more natural than to convert him into a god, and fill the heavens, after this manner, with continual recruits from among mankind. Most of the divinities of the ancient world are supposed to have once been men, and to have been beholden for their *apotheosis* to the admiration and affection of the people. The real history of their adventures, corrupted by tradition, and elevated by the marvellous, became a plentiful source of fable; especially in passing through the hands of poets, allegorists, and priests, who successively improved upon the wonder and astonishment of the ignorant multitude.

7 Painters too and sculptors came in for their share of profit in the sacred mysteries; and furnishing men with sensible representations of their divinities, whom they cloathed in human figures, gave great encrease to the public devotion, and determined its object. It was probably for want of these arts in rude and barbarous ages, that men deified plants, animals, and even brute, unorganized matter; and rather than be without a sensible object of worship, affixed divinity to such ungainly forms.

<sup>31</sup> HESIOD, Theog. l. 933.

<sup>32</sup> Id. ibid. & PLUTARCH. in vita PELOP.

<sup>33</sup> Iliad, 14. 263.

Could any statuary of SYRIA, in early times, have formed a just figure of APOLLO, the conic stone, HELIOGABALUS, had never become the object of such profound adoration, and been received as a representation of the solar deity.<sup>34</sup>

8 STILPO was banished by the council of AREOPAGUS, for affirming that the MINERVA in the citadel was no divinity; but the workmanship of PHIDIAS, the sculptor.<sup>35</sup> What degree of reason must we expect in the religious belief of the vulgar in other nations; when ATHENIANS and AREOPAGITES could entertain such gross conceptions?

9 These then are the general principles of polytheism, founded in human nature, and little or nothing dependent on caprice and accident. As the causes, which bestow happiness or misery, are, in general, very little known and very uncertain, our anxious concern endeavours to attain a determinate idea of them; and finds no better expedient than to represent them as intelligent, voluntary agents, like ourselves; only somewhat superior in power and wisdom. The limited influence of these agents, and their great proximity to human weakness, introduce the various distribution and division of their authority; and thereby give rise to allegory. The same principles naturally deify mortals, superior in power, courage, or understanding, and produce hero-worship; together with fabulous history and mythological tradition, in all its wild and unaccountable forms. And as an invisible spiritual intelligence is an object too refined for vulgar apprehension, men naturally affix it to some sensible representation; such as either the more conspicuous parts of nature, or the statues, images, and pictures, which a more refined age forms of its divinities.

10 Almost all idolaters, of whatever age or country, concur in these general principles and conceptions; and even the particular characters and provinces, which they assign to their deities, are not extremely different.<sup>36</sup> The GREEK and ROMAN travellers and conquerors, without much difficulty, found their own deities every where; and said, This is MERCURY, that VENUS; this MARS, that NEPTUNE; by whatever titles the strange gods might be denominated. The goddess HERTHA of our SAXON ancestors seems to be no other, according to TACITUS,<sup>37</sup> than the *Mater Tellus* of the ROMANS; and his conjecture was evidently just.

<sup>34</sup> HERODIAN. lib. 5. JUPITER AMMON is represented by CURTIUS as a deity of the same kind, lib. 4. cap. 7. The ARABIANS and PESSINUNTIANS adored also shapeless unformed stones as their deity. ARNOB. lib. 6. So much did their folly exceed that of the EGYPTIANS.

<sup>35</sup> DIOG. LÆRT. lib. 2.

<sup>36</sup> See CÆSAR of the religion of the GAULS, de bello Gallico, lib. 6.

<sup>37</sup> De moribus GERM.

## SECTION 6

### Origin of Theism from Polytheism

1 THE doctrine of one supreme Deity, the author of nature, is very ancient, has spread itself over great and populous nations, and among them has been embraced by all ranks and conditions of men: But whoever thinks that it has owed its success to the prevalent force of those invincible reasons, on which it is undoubtedly founded, would show himself little acquainted with the ignorance and stupidity of the people, and their incurable prejudices in favour of their particular superstitions. Even at this day, and in EUROPE, ask any of the vulgar, why he believes in an omnipotent creator of the world; he will never mention the beauty of final causes, of which he is wholly ignorant: He will not hold out his hand, and bid you contemplate the suppleness and variety of joints in his fingers, their bending all one way, the counterpoise which they receive from the thumb, the softness and fleshy parts of the inside of his hand, with all the other circumstances, which render that member fit for the use, to which it was destined. To these he has been long accustomed; and he beholds them with listlessness and unconcern. He will tell you of the sudden and unexpected death of such a one: The fall and bruise of such another: The excessive drought of this season: The cold and rains of another. These he ascribes to the immediate operation of providence: And such events, as, with good reasoners, are the chief difficulties in admitting a supreme intelligence, are with him the sole arguments for it.

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2 Many theists, even the most zealous and refined, have denied a *particular* providence, and have asserted, that the Sovereign mind or first principle of all things, having fixed general laws, by which nature is governed, gives free and uninterrupted course to these laws, and disturbs not, at every turn, the settled order of events by particular volitions. From the beautiful connexion, say they, and rigid observance of established rules, we draw the chief argument for theism; and from the same principles are enabled to answer the principal objections against it. But so little is this understood by the generality of mankind, that, wherever they observe any one to ascribe all events to natural causes, and to remove the particular interposition of a deity, they are apt to suspect him of the grossest infidelity. "A little philosophy," says Lord BACON, "makes men atheists: A great deal reconciles them to

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religion." For men, being taught, by superstitious prejudices, to lay the stress on a wrong place; when that fails them, and they discover, by a little reflection, that the course of nature is regular and uniform, their whole faith totters, and falls to ruin. But being taught, by more reflection, that this very regularity and uniformity is the strongest proof of design and of a supreme intelligence, they return to that belief, which they had deserted; and they are now able to establish it on a firmer and more durable foundation.

3 Convulsions in nature, disorders, prodigies, miracles, though the most opposite to the plan of a wise superintendent, impress mankind with the strongest sentiments of religion; the causes of events seeming then the most unknown and unaccountable. Madness, fury, rage, and an enflamed imagination, though they sink men nearest to the level of beasts, are, for a like reason, often supposed to be the only dispositions, in which we can have any immediate communication with the Deity.

4 We may conclude, therefore, upon the whole, that, since the vulgar, in nations, which have embraced the doctrine of theism, still build it upon irrational and superstitious principles, they are never led into that opinion by any process of argument, but by a certain train of thinking, more suitable to their genius and capacity.

5 It may readily happen, in an idolatrous nation, that, though men admit the existence of several limited deities, yet is there some one God, whom, in a particular manner, they make the object of their worship and adoration. They may either suppose, that, in the distribution of power and territory among the gods, their nation was subjected to the jurisdiction of that particular deity; or reducing heavenly objects to the model of things below, they may represent one god as the prince or supreme magistrate of the rest, who, though of the same nature, rules them with an authority, like that which an earthly sovereign exercises over his subjects and vassals. Whether this god, therefore, be considered as their peculiar patron, or as the general sovereign of heaven, his votaries will endeavour, by every art, to insinuate themselves into his favour; and supposing him to be pleased, like themselves, with praise and flattery, there is no eulogy or exaggeration, which will be spared in their addresses to him. In proportion as men's fears or distresses become more urgent, they still invent new strains of adulation; and even he who outdoes his predecessor in swelling up the titles of his divinity, is sure to be outdone by his successor in newer and more pompous epithets of praise. Thus they proceed; till at last they arrive at infinity itself, beyond which there is no farther progress: And it is well, if, in striving to get farther, and to represent a magnificent simplicity, they run not into inexplicable mystery, and destroy the intelligent nature of their deity, on

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which alone any rational worship or adoration can be founded. While they confine themselves to the notion of a perfect being, the creator of the world, they coincide, by chance, with the principles of reason and true philosophy; though they are guided to that notion, not by reason, of which they are in a great measure incapable, but by the adulation and fears of the most vulgar superstition.

6 We often find, amongst barbarous nations, and even sometimes amongst civilized, that, when every strain of flattery has been exhausted towards arbitrary princes, when every human quality has been applauded to the utmost; their servile courtiers represent them, at last, as real divinities, and point them out to the people as objects of adoration. How much more natural, therefore, is it, that a limited deity, who at first is supposed only the immediate author of the particular goods and ills in life, should in the end be represented as sovereign maker and modifier of the universe?

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7 Even where this notion of a supreme deity is already established; though it ought naturally to lessen every other worship, and abase every object of reverence, yet if a nation has entertained the opinion of a subordinate tutelar divinity, saint, or angel; their addresses to that being gradually rise upon them, and encroach on the adoration due to their supreme deity. The Virgin *Mary*, ere checked by the reformation, had proceeded, from being merely a good woman, to usurp many attributes of the Almighty: God and ST. NICHOLAS go hand in hand, in all the prayers and petitions of the MUSCOVITES.

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8 Thus the deity, who, from love, converted himself into a bull, in order to carry off EUROPA; and who, from ambition, dethroned his father, SATURN, became the OPTIMUS MAXIMUS of the heathens. Thus, the God of ABRAHAM, ISAAC, and JACOB, became the supreme deity or JEHOVAH of the JEWS.

9 The JACOBINS, who denied the immaculate conception, have ever been very unhappy in their doctrine, even though political reasons have kept the ROMISH church from condemning it. The CORDELIERS have run away with all the popularity. But in the fifteenth century, as we learn from BOULAINVILLIERS,<sup>38</sup> an ITALIAN *Cordelier* maintained, that, during the three days, when CHRIST was interred, the hypostatic union was dissolved, and that his human nature was not a proper object of adoration, during that period. Without the art of divination, one might foretel, that so gross and impious a blasphemy would not fail to be anathematized by the people. It was the occasion of great insults on the part of the JACOBINS; who now got some recompence for their misfortunes in the war about the immaculate conception.

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<sup>38</sup> Histoire abrégée, p. 499.

10 Rather than relinquish this propensity to adulation, religionists, in all ages, have involved themselves in the greatest absurdities and contradictions.

11 HOMER, in one passage, calls OCEANUS and TETHYS the original parents of all things, conformably to the established mythology and tradition of the GREEKS: Yet, in other passages, he could not forbear complimenting JUPITER, the reigning deity, with that magnificent appellation; and accordingly denominates him the father of gods and men. He forgets, that every temple, every street was full of the ancestors, uncles, brothers, and sisters of this JUPITER; who was in reality nothing but an upstart parricide and usurper. A like contradiction is observable in HESIOD; and is so much the less excusable, as his professed intention was to deliver a true genealogy of the gods. 10

12 Were there a religion (and we may suspect MAHOMETANISM of this inconsistence) which sometimes painted the Deity in the most sublime colours, as the creator of heaven and earth; sometimes degraded him nearly to a level with human creatures in his powers and faculties; while at the same time it ascribed to him suitable infirmities, passions, and partialities, of the moral kind: That religion, after it was extinct, would also be cited as an instance of those contradictions, which arise from the gross, vulgar, natural conceptions of mankind, opposed to their continual propensity towards flattery and exaggeration. Nothing indeed would prove more strongly the divine origin of any religion, than to find (and happily this is the case with CHRISTIANITY) that it is free from a contradiction, so incident to human nature. 20

## SECTION 7

### Confirmation of this Doctrine

- 1 It appears certain, that, though the original notions of the vulgar represent the Divinity as a limited being, and consider him only as the particular cause of health or sickness; plenty or want; prosperity or adversity; yet when more magnificent ideas are urged upon them, they esteem it dangerous to refuse their assent. Will you say, that your deity is finite and bounded in his perfections; may be overcome by a greater force; is subject to human passions, pains, and infirmities; has a beginning, and may have an end? This they dare not affirm; but thinking it safest to comply with the higher encomiums, they endeavour, by an affected ravishment and devotion, to ingratiate themselves with him. As a confirmation of this, we may observe, that the assent of the vulgar is, in this case, merely verbal, and that they are incapable of conceiving those sublime qualities, which they seemingly attribute to the Deity. Their real idea of him, notwithstanding their pompous language, is still as poor and frivolous as ever.
- 2 That original intelligence, say the MAGIANS, who is the first principle of all things, discovers himself *immediately* to the mind and understanding alone; but has placed the sun as his image in the visible universe; and when that bright luminary diffuses its beams over the earth and the firmament, it is a faint copy of the glory, which resides in the higher heavens. If you would escape the displeasure of this divine being, you must be careful never to set your bare foot upon the ground, nor spit into a fire, nor throw any water upon it, even though it were consuming a whole city.<sup>39</sup> Who can express the perfections of the Almighty? say the MAHOMETANS. Even the noblest of his works, if compared to him, are but dust and rubbish. How much more must human conception fall short of his infinite perfections? His smile and favour renders men for ever happy; and to obtain it for your children, the best method is to cut off from them, while infants, a little bit of skin, about half the breadth of a farthing. Take two bits of cloth,<sup>40</sup> say the ROMAN CATHOLICS, about an inch or an inch and a half square, join them by the corners with two strings or pieces of tape about sixteen inches long, throw this over your head, and make one of the bits of cloth lie upon your

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<sup>39</sup> HYDE, de Relig. veterum PERSARUM.

<sup>40</sup> Called the Scapulaire.

breast, and the other upon your back, keeping them next your skin: There is not a better secret for recommending yourself to that infinite Being, who exists from eternity to eternity.

- 3 The GETES, commonly called immortal, from their steady belief of the soul's immortality, were genuine theists and unitarians. They affirmed ZAMOLXIS, their deity, to be the only true god; and asserted the worship of all other nations to be addressed to mere fictions and chimeras. But were their religious principles any more refined, on account of these magnificent pretensions? Every fifth year they sacrificed a human victim, whom they sent as a messenger to their deity, in order to inform him of their wants and necessities. And when it thundered, they were so provoked, that, in order to return the defiance, they let fly arrows at him, and declined not the combat as unequal. Such at least is the account, which HERODOTUS gives of the theism of the immortal GETES.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Lib. 4.

## SECTION 8

### Flux and Reflux of Polytheism and Theism

1 IT is remarkable, that the principles of religion have a kind of flux and reflux in the human mind, and that men have a natural tendency to rise from idolatry to theism, and to sink again from theism into idolatry. The vulgar, that is, indeed, all mankind, a few excepted, being ignorant and uninstructed, never elevate their contemplation to the heavens, or penetrate by their disquisitions into the secret structure of vegetable or animal bodies; so far as to discover a supreme mind or original providence, which bestowed order on every part of nature. They consider these admirable works in a more confined and selfish view; and finding their own happiness and misery to depend on the secret influence and unforeseen concurrence of external objects, they regard, with perpetual attention, the *unknown causes*, which govern all these natural events, and distribute pleasure and pain, good and ill, by their powerful, but silent, operation. The unknown causes are still appealed to on every emergence; and in this general appearance or confused image, are the perpetual objects of human hopes and fears, wishes and apprehensions. By degrees, the active imagination of men, uneasy in this abstract conception of objects, about which it is incessantly employed, begins to render them more particular, and to clothe them in shapes more suitable to its natural comprehension. It represents them to be sensible, intelligent beings, like mankind; actuated by love and hatred, and flexible by gifts and entreaties, by prayers and sacrifices. Hence the origin of religion: And hence the origin of idolatry or polytheism.

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2 But the same anxious concern for happiness, which begets the idea of these invisible, intelligent powers, allows not mankind to remain long in the first simple conception of them; as powerful, but limited beings; masters of human fate, but slaves to destiny and the course of nature. Men's exaggerated praises and compliments still swell their idea upon them; and elevating their deities to the utmost bounds of perfection, at last beget the attributes of unity and infinity, simplicity and spirituality. Such refined ideas, being somewhat disproportioned to vulgar comprehension, remain not long in their original purity; but require to be supported by the notion of inferior mediators or subordinate agents, which interpose between mankind and their supreme deity. These demi-gods or middle beings,

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partaking more of human nature, and being more familiar to us, become the chief objects of devotion, and gradually recall that idolatry, which had been formerly banished by the ardent prayers and panegyrics of timorous and indigent mortals. But as these idolatrous religions fall every day into grosser and more vulgar conceptions, they at last destroy themselves, and, by the vile representations, which they form of their deities, make the tide turn again towards theism. But so great is the propensity, in this alternate revolution of human sentiments, to return back to idolatry, that the utmost precaution is not able effectually to prevent it. And of this, some theists, particularly the JEWS and MAHOMETANS, have been sensible; as appears by their banishing all the arts of statuary and painting, and not allowing the representations, even of human figures, to be taken by marble or colours; lest the common infirmity of mankind should thence produce idolatry. The feeble apprehensions of men cannot be satisfied with conceiving their deity as a pure spirit and perfect intelligence; and yet their natural terrors keep them from imputing to him the least shadow of limitation and imperfection. They fluctuate between these opposite sentiments. The same infirmity still drags them downwards, from an omnipotent and spiritual deity, to a limited and corporeal one, and from a corporeal and limited deity to a statue or visible representation. The same endeavour at elevation still pushes them upwards, from the statue or material image to the invisible power; and from the invisible power to an infinitely perfect deity, the creator and sovereign of the universe.

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## SECTION 9

### Comparison of these Religions, with regard to Persecution and Toleration

- 1 POLYTHEISM or idolatrous worship, being founded entirely in vulgar traditions, is liable to this great inconvenience, that any practice or opinion, however barbarous or corrupted, may be authorized by it; and full scope is given, for knavery to impose on credulity, till morals and humanity be expelled from the religious systems of mankind. At the same time, idolatry is attended with this evident advantage, that, by limiting the powers and functions of its deities, it naturally admits the gods of other sects and nations to a share of divinity, and renders all the various deities, as well as rites, ceremonies, or traditions, compatible with each other.<sup>42</sup> Theism is opposite both in its advantages and disadvantages. As that system supposes one sole Deity, the perfection of reason and goodness, it should, if justly prosecuted, banish every thing frivolous, unreasonable, or inhuman from religious worship, and set before men the most illustrious example, as well as the most commanding motives, of justice and benevolence. These mighty advantages are not indeed overbalanced, (for that is not possible) but somewhat diminished, by inconveniences, which arise from the vices and prejudices of mankind. While one sole object of devotion is acknowledged, the worship of other deities is regarded as absurd and impious. Nay, this unity of object seems naturally to require the unity of faith and ceremonies, and furnishes designing men with a pretence for representing their adversaries as profane, and the objects of divine as well as human vengeance. For as each sect is positive that its own faith and worship are entirely acceptable to the Deity, and as no one can conceive, that the same being should be pleased with different and opposite rites and principles; the several sects fall naturally

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<sup>42</sup> VERRIUS FLACCUS, cited by PLINY, lib. 28. cap. 2. affirmed, that it was usual for the ROMANS, before they laid siege to any town, to invoke the tutelar deity of the place, and by promising him greater honours than those he at present enjoyed, bribe him to betray his old friends and votaries. The name of the tutelar deity of ROME was for this reason kept a most religious mystery; lest the enemies of the republic should be able, in the same manner, to draw him over to their service. For without the name, they thought, nothing of that kind could be practiced. PLINY says, that the common form of invocation was preserved to his time in the ritual of the pontiffs. And MACROBIUS has transmitted a copy of it from the secret things of SAMMONICUS SERENUS.

into animosity, and mutually discharge on each other that sacred zeal and rancour, the most furious and implacable of all human passions.

2 The tolerating spirit of idolaters, both in ancient and modern times, is very obvious to any one, who is the least conversant in the writings of historians or travellers. When the oracle of DELPHI was asked, *What rites or worship was most acceptable to the gods?* "Those which are legally established in each city," replied the oracle.<sup>43</sup> Even priests, in those ages, could, it seems, allow salvation to those of a different communion. The ROMANS commonly adopted the gods of the conquered people; and never disputed the attributes of those local and national deities, in whose territories they resided. The religious wars and persecutions of the EGYPTIAN idolaters are indeed an exception to this rule; but are accounted for by ancient authors from reasons singular and remarkable. Different species of animals were the deities of the different sects among the EGYPTIANS; and the deities being in continual war, engaged their votaries in the same contention. The worshippers of dogs could not long remain in peace with the adorers of cats or wolves.<sup>44</sup> But where that reason took not place, the EGYPTIAN superstition was not so incompatible as is commonly imagined; since we learn from HERODOTUS,<sup>45</sup> that very large contributions were given by AMASIS towards rebuilding the temple of DELPHI.

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3 The intolerance of almost all religions, which have maintained the unity of God, is as remarkable as the contrary principle of polytheists. The implacable narrow spirit of the JEWS is well known. MAHOMETANISM set out with still more bloody principles; and even to this day, deals out damnation, though not fire and faggot, to all other sects. And if, among CHRISTIANS, the ENGLISH and DUTCH have embraced the principles of toleration, this singularity has proceeded from the steady resolution of the civil magistrate, in opposition to the continued efforts of priests and bigots.

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4 The disciples of ZOROASTER shut the doors of heaven against all but the MAGIANS.<sup>46</sup> Nothing could more obstruct the progress of the PERSIAN conquests, than the furious zeal of that nation against the temples and images of the GREEKS. And after the overthrow of that empire, we find ALEXANDER, as a polytheist, immediately re-establishing the worship of the BABYLONIANS, which their former princes, as monotheists, had carefully abolished.<sup>47</sup> Even the blind and devoted attachment of that conqueror to the GREEK superstition hindered not but he himself sacrificed according to the BABYLONISH rites and ceremonies.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> XENOPH. Memor. lib. 1.

<sup>44</sup> PLUTARCH. de Isid. & OSIRIDE.

<sup>45</sup> Lib. 2. sub fine.

<sup>46</sup> HYDE, de Relig. vet. PERSARUM.

<sup>47</sup> ARRIAN. de exped. lib. 3. Id. lib. 7.

<sup>48</sup> Id. ibid.

5 So sociable is polytheism, that the utmost fierceness and antipathy, which it meets with in an opposite religion, is scarcely able to disgust it, and keep it at a distance. AUGUSTUS praised extremely the reserve of his grandson, CAIUS CÆSAR, when this latter prince, passing by JERUSALEM, deigned not to sacrifice according to the JEWISH law. But for what reason did AUGUSTUS so much approve of this conduct? Only, because that religion was by the PAGANS esteemed ignoble and barbarous.<sup>49</sup>

6 I may venture to affirm, that few corruptions of idolatry and polytheism are more pernicious to society than this corruption of theism,<sup>50</sup> when carried to the utmost height. The human sacrifices of the CARTHAGINIANS, MEXICANS, and many barbarous nations,<sup>51</sup> scarcely exceed the inquisition and persecutions of ROME and MADRID. For besides, that the effusion of blood may not be so great in the former case as in the latter; besides this, I say, the human victims, being chosen by lot, or by some exterior signs, affect not, in so considerable a degree, the rest of the society. Whereas virtue, knowledge, love of liberty, are the qualities, which call down the fatal vengeance of inquisitors; and when expelled, leave the society in the most shameful ignorance, corruption, and bondage. The illegal murder of one man by a tyrant is more pernicious than the death of a thousand by pestilence, famine, or any undistinguishing calamity.

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7 In the temple of DIANA at ARICIA near ROME, whoever murdered the present priest, was legally entitled to be installed his successor.<sup>52</sup> A very singular institution! For, however barbarous and bloody the common superstitions often are to the laity, they usually turn to the advantage of the holy order.

<sup>49</sup> SUETON. in vita AUG. cap. 93.

<sup>50</sup> *Corruptio optimi pessima.*

<sup>51</sup> Most nations have fallen into this guilt of human sacrifices; though, perhaps, that impious superstition has never prevailed very much in any civilized nation, unless we except the CARTHAGINIANS. For the TYRIANS soon abolished it. A sacrifice is conceived as a present; and any present is delivered to their deity by destroying it and rendering it useless to men; by burning what is solid, pouring out the liquid, and killing the animate. For want of a better way of doing him service, we do ourselves an injury; and fancy that we thereby express, at least, the heartiness of our good-will and adoration. Thus our mercenary devotion deceives ourselves, and imagines it deceives the deity.

<sup>52</sup> STRABO, lib. 5. SUETON. in vita CAL.

## SECTION 10

### With regard to Courage or Abasement

- 1 FROM the comparison of theism and idolatry, we may form some other observations, which will also confirm the vulgar observation, that the corruption of the best things gives rise to the worst.
- 2 Where the Deity is represented as infinitely superior to mankind, this belief, though altogether just, is apt, when joined with superstitious terrors, to sink the human mind into the lowest submission and abasement, and to represent the monkish virtues of mortification, penance, humility, and passive suffering, as the only qualities which are acceptable to him. But where the gods are conceived to be only a little superior to mankind, and to have been, many of them, advanced from that inferior rank, we are more at our ease in our addresses to them, and may even, without profaneness, aspire sometimes to a rivalship and emulation of them. Hence activity, spirit, courage, magnanimity, love of liberty, and all the virtues which aggrandize a people.  
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- 3 The heroes in paganism correspond exactly to the saints in popery and holy dervises in MAHOMETANISM. The place of HERCULES, THESEUS, HECTOR, ROMULUS, is now supplied by DOMINIC, FRANCIS, ANTHONY, and BENEDICT. Instead of the destruction of monsters, the subduing of tyrants, the defence of our native country; whippings and fastings, cowardice and humility, abject submission and slavish obedience, are become the means of obtaining celestial honours among mankind.  
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- 4 One great incitement to the pious ALEXANDER in his warlike expeditions was his rivalship of HERCULES and BACCHUS, whom he justly pretended to have excelled.<sup>53</sup> BRASIDAS, that generous and noble SPARTAN, after falling in battle, had heroic honours paid him by the inhabitants of AMPHIPOLIS, whose defence he had embraced.<sup>54</sup> And in general, all founders of states and colonies among the GREEKS were raised to this inferior rank of divinity, by those who reaped the benefit of their labours.
- 5 This gave rise to the observation of MACHIAVEL,<sup>55</sup> that the doctrines of the CHRISTIAN religion (meaning the catholic; for he knew no other) which recommend only passive courage and suffering, had subdued the spirit of  
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<sup>53</sup> ARRIAN. *passim.*

<sup>54</sup> THUCYD. lib. 5.

<sup>55</sup> Discorsi, lib. 6.

mankind, and had fitted them for slavery and subjection. An observation, which would certainly be just, were there not many other circumstances in human society which controul the genius and character of a religion.

- 6 BRASIDAS seized a mouse, and being bit by it, let it go. "There is nothing so contemptible," said he, "but what may be safe, if it has but courage to defend itself."<sup>56</sup> BELLARMINE patiently and humbly allowed the fleas and other odious vermin to prey upon him. "We shall have heaven," said he, "to reward us for our sufferings: But these poor creatures have nothing but the enjoyment of the present life."<sup>57</sup> Such difference is there between the maxims of a GREEK hero and a CATHOLIC saint.

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<sup>56</sup> PLUTARCH. *Apophth.*

<sup>57</sup> BAYLE, Article BELLARMINE.

## SECTION 11

### With regard to Reason or Absurdity

- 1 HERE is another observation to the same purpose, and a new proof that the corruption of the best things begets the worst. If we examine, without prejudice, the ancient heathen mythology, as contained in the poets, we shall not discover in it any such monstrous absurdity, as we may at first be apt to apprehend. Where is the difficulty in conceiving, that the same powers or principles, whatever they were, which formed this visible world, men and animals, produced also a species of intelligent creatures, of more refined substance and greater authority than the rest? That these creatures may be capricious, revengeful, passionate, voluptuous, is easily conceived; nor is any circumstance more apt, among ourselves, to engender such vices, than the licence of absolute authority. And in short, the whole mythological system is so natural, that, in the vast variety of planets and worlds, contained in this universe, it seems more than probable, that, somewhere or other, it is really carried into execution.
- 2 The chief objection to it with regard to this planet, is, that it is not ascertained by any just reason or authority. The ancient tradition, insisted on by heathen priests and theologers, is but a weak foundation; and transmitted also such a number of contradictory reports, supported, all of them, by equal authority, that it became absolutely impossible to fix a preference amongst them. A few volumes, therefore, must contain all the polemical writings of pagan priests: And their whole theology must consist more of traditional stories and superstitious practices than of philosophical argument and controversy.
- 3 But where theism forms the fundamental principle of any popular religion, that tenet is so conformable to sound reason, that philosophy is apt to incorporate itself with such a system of theology. And if the other dogmas of that system be contained in a sacred book, such as the Alcoran, or be determined by any visible authority, like that of the ROMAN pontiff, speculative reasoners naturally carry on their assent, and embrace a theory, which has been instilled into them by their earliest education, and which also possesses some degree of consistence and uniformity. But as these appearances are sure, all of them, to prove deceitful, philosophy will soon find herself very unequally yoked with her new associate; and instead of

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regulating each principle, as they advance together, she is at every turn perverted to serve the purposes of superstition. For besides the unavoidable incoherencies, which must be reconciled and adjusted; one may safely affirm, that all popular theology, especially the scholastic, has a kind of appetite for absurdity and contradiction. If that theology went not beyond reason and common sense, her doctrines would appear too easy and familiar. Amazement must of necessity be raised: Mystery affected: Darkness and obscurity sought after: And a foundation of merit afforded to the devout votaries, who desire an opportunity of subduing their rebellious reason, by the belief of the most unintelligible sophisms.

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4 Ecclesiastical history sufficiently confirms these reflections. When a controversy is started, some people always pretend with certainty to foretel the issue. Whichever opinion, say they, is most contrary to plain sense is sure to prevail; even where the general interest of the system requires not that decision. Though the reproach of heresy may, for some time, be bandied about among the disputants, it always rests at last on the side of reason. Any one, it is pretended, that has but learning enough of this kind to know the definition of ARIAN, PELAGIAN, ERASTIAN, SOCINIAN, SABELLIAN, EUTYCHIAN, NESTORIAN, MONOTHELITE, &c. not to mention PROTESTANT, whose fate is yet uncertain, will be convinced of the truth of this observation. It is thus a system becomes more absurd in the end, merely from its being reasonable and philosophical in the beginning.

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5 To oppose the torrent of scholastic religion by such feeble maxims as these, that *it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be*, that *the whole is greater than a part*, that *two and three make five*; is pretending to stop the ocean with a bull-rush. Will you set up profane reason against sacred mystery? No punishment is great enough for your impiety. And the same fires, which were kindled for heretics, will serve also for the destruction of philosophers.

## SECTION 12

### With regard to Doubt or Conviction

- 1 WE meet every day with people so sceptical with regard to history, that they assert it impossible for any nation ever to believe such absurd principles as those of GREEK and EGYPTIAN paganism; and at the same time so dogmatical with regard to religion, that they think the same absurdities are to be found in no other communion. CAMBYSES entertained like prejudices; and very impiously ridiculed, and even wounded, APIS, the great god of the EGYPTIANS, who appeared to his profane senses nothing but a large spotted bull. But HERODOTUS judiciously ascribes this sally of passion to a real madness or disorder of the brain: Otherwise, says the historian, he never would have openly affronted any established worship. For on that head, continues he, every nation are best satisfied with their own, and think they have the advantage over every other nation.
- 2 It must be allowed, that the ROMAN CATHOLICS are a very learned sect; and that no one communion, but that of the church of ENGLAND, can dispute their being the most learned of all the CHRISTIAN churches: Yet AVERROES, the famous ARABIAN, who, no doubt, had heard of the EGYPTIAN superstitions, declares, that, of all religions, the most absurd and nonsensical is that, whose votaries eat, after having created, their deity.
- 3 I believe, indeed, that there is no tenet in all paganism, which would give so fair a scope to ridicule as this of the *real presence*: For it is so absurd, that it eludes the force of all argument. There are even some pleasant stories of that kind, which, though somewhat profane, are commonly told by the CATHOLICS themselves. One day, a priest, it is said, gave inadvertently, instead of the sacrament, a counter, which had by accident fallen among the holy wafers. The communicant waited patiently for some time, expecting it would dissolve on his tongue: But finding that it still remained entire, he took it off. "I wish," cried he to the priest, "you have not committed some mistake: I wish you have not given me God the Father: He is so hard and tough there is no swallowing him."
- 4 A famous general, at that time in the MOSCOVITE service, having come to PARIS for the recovery of his wounds, brought along with him a young TURK, whom he had taken prisoner. Some of the doctors of the SORBONNE (who are altogether as positive as the dervises of CONSTANTINOPLE) thinking

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it a pity, that the poor TURK should be damned for want of instruction, solicited MUSTAPHA very hard to turn CHRISTIAN, and promised him, for his encouragement, plenty of good wine in this world, and paradise in the next. These allurements were too powerful to be resisted; and therefore, having been well instructed and catechized, he at last agreed to receive the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper. The priest, however, to make every thing sure and solid, still continued his instructions; and began the next day with the usual question, "How many Gods are there?" "None at all," replies BENEDICT; for that was his new name. "How! None at all!" cries the priest. "To be sure," said the honest proselyte. "You have told me all along that there is but one God: And yesterday I eat him."

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5 Such are the doctrines of our brethren the CATHOLICS. But to these doctrines we are so accustomed, that we never wonder at them: Though, in a future age, it will probably become difficult to persuade some nations, that any human, two-legged creature could ever embrace such principles. And it is a thousand to one, but these nations themselves shall have something full as absurd in their own creed, to which they will give a most implicit and most religious assent.

6 I lodged once at PARIS in the same *hotel* with an ambassador from TUNIS, who, having passed some years at LONDON, was returning home that way. One day I observed his MOORISH excellency diverting himself under the porch, with surveying the splendid equipages that drove along; when there chanced to pass that way some *Capuchin* friars, who had never seen a TURK; as he, on his part, though accustomed to the EUROPEAN dresses, had never seen the grotesque figure of a *Capuchin*: And there is no expressing the mutual admiration, with which they inspired each other. Had the chaplain of the embassy entered into a dispute with these FRANCISCANS, their reciprocal surprize had been of the same nature. Thus all mankind stand staring at one another; and there is no beating it into their heads, that the turban of the AFRICAN is not just as good or as bad a fashion as the cowl of the EUROPEAN. "He is a very honest man," said the prince of SALIEE, speaking of de RUYTER, "It is a pity he were a CHRISTIAN."

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7 *How can you worship leeks and onions?* we shall suppose a SORBONNIST to say to a priest of SACS. *If we worship them,* replies the latter; *at least, we do not, at the same time, eat them.* *But what strange objects of adoration are cats and monkies?* says the learned doctor. *They are at least as good as the relicts or rotten bones of martyrs,* answers his no less learned antagonist. *Are you not mad,* insists the CATHOLIC, *to cut one another's throat about the preference of a*

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*cabbage or a cucumber? Yes, says the pagan; I allow it, if you will confess, that those are still madder, who fight about the preference among volumes of sophistry, ten thousand of which are not equal in value to one cabbage or cucumber.*<sup>58</sup>

- 8 Every by-stander will easily judge (but unfortunately the by-standers are few) that, if nothing were requisite to establish any popular system, but exposing the absurdities of other systems, every votary of every superstition could give a sufficient reason for his blind and bigotted attachment to the principles in which he has been educated. But without so extensive a knowledge, on which to ground this assurance, (and perhaps, better without it) there is not wanting a sufficient stock of religious zeal and faith among mankind. DIODORUS SICULUS<sup>59</sup> gives a remarkable instance to this purpose, of which he was himself an eye-witness. While EGYPT lay under the greatest terror of the ROMAN name, a legionary soldier having inadvertently been guilty of the sacrilegious impiety of killing a cat, the whole people rose upon him with the utmost fury; and all the efforts of the prince were not able to save him. The senate and people of ROME, I am persuaded, would not, then, have been so delicate with regard to their national deities. They very frankly, a little after that time, voted AUGUSTUS a place in the celestial mansions; and would have dethroned every god in heaven, for his sake, had he seemed to desire it. "Præsens divus habebitur AUGUSTUS," says HORACE. That is a very important point: And in other nations and other ages, the same circumstance has not been deemed altogether indifferent.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> It is strange that the EGYPTIAN religion, though so absurd, should yet have borne so great a resemblance to the JEWISH, that ancient writers even of the greatest genius were not able to observe any difference between them. For it is remarkable that both TACITUS and SUETONIUS, when they mention that decree of the senate, under TIBERIUS, by which the EGYPTIAN and JEWISH proselytes were banished from ROME, expressly treat these religions as the same; and it appears, that even the decree itself was founded on that supposition. "Actum & de sacris ÆGYPTIIS, JUDAICISQUE pellendis; factumque patrum consultum, ut quatuor millia libertini generis ea superstitione infecta, quis idonea ætas, in insulam Sardiniam veherentur, coercendis illic latrociniis; & si ob gravitatem coeli interissent, vile damnum: Ceteri cederent ITALIA, nisi certam ante diem profanos ritus exissent." TACIT. ann. lib. 2. cap. 85. "Externas cæremonias, ÆGYPTIOS, JUDAICOSQUE ritus compescuit; coactis qui superstitione ea tenebantur, religiosas vestes cum instrumento omni comburere," &c. SUETON. TIBER. cap. 36. These wise heathens, observing something in the general air, and genius, and spirit of the two religions to be the same, esteemed the differences of their dogmas too frivolous to deserve any attention.

<sup>59</sup> Lib. 1.

<sup>60</sup> When Louis the XIVth took on himself the protection of the JESUITS' College of CLERMONT, the society ordered the king's arms to be put up over the gate, and took down the cross, in order to make way for it: Which gave occasion to the following epigram:

Sustulit hinc Christi, posuitque insignia Regis:  
Impia gens, alium nescit habere Deum.

9 Notwithstanding the sanctity of our holy religion, says TULLY,<sup>61</sup> no crime is more common with us than sacrilege: But was it ever heard of, that an EGYPTIAN violated the temple of a cat, an ibis, or a crocodile? There is no torture, an EGYPTIAN would not undergo, says the same author in another place,<sup>62</sup> rather than injure an ibis, an aspic, a cat, a dog, or a crocodile. Thus it is strictly true, what DRYDEN observes,

Of whatsoe'er descent their godhead be,  
Stock, stone, or other homely pedigree,  
In his defence his servants are as bold,  
As if he had been born of beaten gold.

10 ABSALOM and ACHITOPHEL.

Nay, the baser the materials are, of which the divinity is composed, the greater devotion is he likely to excite in the breasts of his deluded votaries. They exult in their shame, and make a merit with their deity, in braving, for his sake, all the ridicule and contumely of his enemies. Ten thousand Crusaders enlist themselves under the holy banners; and even openly triumph in those parts of their religion, which their adversaries regard as the most reproachful.

10 There occurs, I own, a difficulty in the EGYPTIAN system of theology; as indeed, few systems of that kind are entirely free from difficulties. It is evident, from their method of propagation, that a couple of cats, in fifty years, would stock a whole kingdom; and if that religious veneration were still paid them, it would, in twenty more, not only be easier in EGYPT to find a god than a man, which PETRONIUS says was the case in some parts of ITALY; but the gods must at last entirely starve the men, and leave themselves neither priests nor votaries remaining. It is probable, therefore, that this wise nation, the most celebrated in antiquity for prudence and sound policy, foreseeing such dangerous consequences, reserved all their worship for the full-grown divinities, and used the freedom to drown the holy spawn or little sucking gods, without any scruple or remorse. And thus the practice of warping the tenets of religion, in order to serve temporal interests, is not, by any means, to be regarded as an invention of these later ages.

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11 The learned, philosophical VARRO, discoursing of religion, pretends not to deliver any thing beyond probabilities and appearances: Such was his good sense and moderation! But the passionate, the zealous AUGUSTINE, insults the noble ROMAN on his scepticism and reserve, and professes the most thorough belief and assurance.<sup>63</sup> A heathen poet, however, contemporary

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<sup>61</sup> De nat. Deor. lib. 1.

<sup>62</sup> Tusc. quæst. lib. 5.

<sup>63</sup> De civitate Dei, lib. 7. cap. 17.

with the saint, absurdly esteems the religious system of the latter so false, that even the credulity of children, he says, could not engage them to believe it.<sup>64</sup>

12 Is it strange, when mistakes are so common, to find every one positive and dogmatical? And that the zeal often rises in proportion to the error? "Moverunt," says SPARTIAN, "& ea tempestate, Judæi bellum quod vetabantur mutilare genitalia."<sup>65</sup>

13 If ever there was a nation or a time, in which the public religion lost all authority over mankind, we might expect, that infidelity in ROME, during the CICERONIAN age, would openly have erected its throne, and that CICERO himself, in every speech and action, would have been its most declared abettor. But it appears, that, whatever sceptical liberties that great man might take, in his writings or in philosophical conversation; he yet avoided, in the common conduct of life, the imputation of deism and profaneness. Even in his own family, and to his wife TERENTIA, whom he highly trusted, he was willing to appear a devout religionist; and there remains a letter, addressed to her, in which he seriously desires her to offer sacrifice to APOLLO and AEsculapius, in gratitude for the recovery of his health.<sup>66</sup>

14 POMPEY's devotion was much more sincere: In all his conduct, during the civil wars, he paid a great regard to auguries, dreams, and prophesies.<sup>67</sup> AUGUSTUS was tainted with superstition of every kind. As it is reported of MILTON, that his poetical genius never flowed with ease and abundance in the spring; so AUGUSTUS observed, that his own genius for dreaming never was so perfect during that season, nor was so much to be relied on, as during the rest of the year. That great and able emperor was also extremely uneasy, when he happened to change his shoes, and put the right foot shoe on the left foot.<sup>68</sup> In short, it cannot be doubted, but the votaries of the established superstition of antiquity were as numerous in every state, as those of the modern religion are at present. Its influence was as universal; though it was not so great. As many people gave their assent to it; though that assent was not seemingly so strong, precise, and affirmative.

15 We may observe, that, notwithstanding the dogmatical, imperious style of all superstition, the conviction of the religionists, in all ages, is more affected than real, and scarcely ever approaches, in any degree, to that solid belief and persuasion, which governs us in the common affairs of life. Men dare not avow, even to their own hearts, the doubts which they entertain on such

<sup>64</sup> CLAUDII RUTILII NUMITIANI, iter. lib. 1. l. 387.

<sup>65</sup> In vita ADRIANI.

<sup>66</sup> Lib. 14. epist. 7.

<sup>67</sup> CICERO, de Divin. lib. 2. cap. 24.

<sup>68</sup> SUETON. AUG. cap. 90, 91, 92. PLIN. lib. 2. cap. 7.

subjects: They make a merit of implicit faith; and disguise to themselves their real infidelity, by the strongest asseverations and most positive bigotry. But nature is too hard for all their endeavours, and suffers not the obscure, glimmering light, afforded in those shadowy regions, to equal the strong impressions, made by common sense and by experience. The usual course of men's conduct belies their words, and shows, that their assent in these matters is some unaccountable operation of the mind between disbelief and conviction, but approaching much nearer to the former than to the latter.

16 Since, therefore, the mind of man appears of so loose and unsteady a texture, that, even at present, when so many persons find an interest in continually employing on it the chissel and the hammer, yet are they not able to engrave theological tenets with any lasting impression; how much more must this have been the case in ancient times, when the retainers to the holy function were so much fewer in comparison? No wonder, that the appearances were then very inconsistent, and that men, on some occasions, might seem determined infidels, and enemies to the established religion, without being so in reality; or at least, without knowing their own minds in that particular.

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17 Another cause, which rendered the ancient religions much looser than the modern, is, that the former were *traditional* and the latter are *scriptural*; and the tradition in the former was complex, contradictory, and, on many occasions, doubtful; so that it could not possibly be reduced to any standard and canon, or afford any determinate articles of faith. The stories of the gods were numberless like the popish legends; and though every one, almost, believed a part of these stories, yet no one could believe or know the whole: While, at the same time, all must have acknowledged, that no one part stood on a better foundation than the rest. The traditions of different cities and nations were also, on many occasions, directly opposite; and no reason could be assigned for preferring one to the other. And as there was an infinite number of stories, with regard to which tradition was nowise positive; the gradation was insensible, from the most fundamental articles of faith, to those loose and precarious fictions. The pagan religion, therefore, seemed to vanish like a cloud, whenever one approached to it, and examined it piecemeal. It could never be ascertained by any fixed dogmas and principles. And though this did not convert the generality of mankind from so absurd a faith; for when will the people be reasonable? yet it made them falter and hesitate more in maintaining their principles, and was even apt to produce, in certain dispositions of mind,

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some practices and opinions, which had the appearance of determined infidelity.

18 To which we may add, that the fables of the pagan religion were, of themselves, light, easy, and familiar; without devils, or seas of brimstone, or any object that could much terrify the imagination. Who could forbear smiling, when he thought of the loves of MARS and VENUS, or the amorous frolics of JUPITER and PAN? In this respect, it was a true poetical religion; if it had not rather too much levity for the graver kinds of poetry. We find that it has been adopted by modern bards; nor have these talked with greater freedom and irreverence of the gods, whom they regarded as fictions, than the ancients did of the real objects of their devotion.

19 The inference is by no means just, that, because a system of religion has made no deep impression on the minds of a people, it must therefore have been positively rejected by all men of common sense, and that opposite principles, in spite of the prejudices of education, were generally established by argument and reasoning. I know not, but a contrary inference may be more probable. The less importunate and assuming any species of superstition appears, the less will it provoke men's spleen and indignation, or engage them into enquiries concerning its foundation and origin. This in the mean time is obvious, that the empire of all religious faith over the understanding is wavering and uncertain, subject to every variety of humour, and dependent on the present incidents, which strike the imagination. The difference is only in the degrees. An ancient will place a stroke of impiety and one of superstition alternately, throughout a whole discourse:<sup>69</sup> A modern often thinks in the same way, though he may be more guarded in his expression.

20 LUCIAN tells us expressly,<sup>70</sup> that whoever believed not the most ridiculous fables of paganism was deemed by the people profane and impious. To what purpose, indeed, would that agreeable author have employed the whole force of his wit and satire against the national religion, had not that religion been generally believed by his countrymen and contemporaries?

21 LIVY<sup>71</sup> acknowledges as frankly, as any divine would at present, the common incredulity of his age; but then he condemns it as severely.

<sup>69</sup> Witness this remarkable passage of TACITUS: "Præter multiplices rerum humanarum casus, cœlo terraque prodigia, & fulminum monitus, & futurorum præsagia, læta, tristia, ambigua, manifesta. Nec enim unquam atrocioribus populi Romani cladibus, magisque justis judiciis approbatum est, non esse curæ Diis securitatem nostram, esse ultionem." Hist. lib. 1. AUGUSTUS's quarrel with NEPTUNE is an instance of the same kind. Had not the emperor believed NEPTUNE to be a real being, and to have dominion over the sea, where had been the foundation of his anger? And if he believed it, what madness to provoke still farther that deity? The same observation may be made upon QUINTILIAN's exclamation, on account of the death of his children, lib. 6. Præf.

<sup>70</sup> Philopseudes.

<sup>71</sup> Lib. 10. cap. 40.

And who can imagine, that a national superstition, which could delude so ingenious a man, would not also impose on the generality of the people?

22 The STOICS bestowed many magnificent and even impious epithets on their sage; that he alone was rich, free, a king, and equal to the immortal gods. They forgot to add, that he was not inferior in prudence and understanding to an old woman. For surely nothing can be more pitiful than the sentiments, which that sect entertained with regard to religious matters; while they seriously agree with the common augurs, that, when a raven croaks from the left, it is a good omen; but a bad one, when a rook makes a noise from the same quarter. PANÆTIUS was the only STOIC, among the GREEKS, who so much as doubted with regard to auguries and divinations.<sup>72</sup> MARCUS ANTONINUS<sup>73</sup> tells us, that he himself had received many admonitions from the gods in his sleep. It is true, EPICTETUS<sup>74</sup> forbids us to regard the language of rooks and ravens; but it is not, that they do not speak truth: It is only, because they can foretel nothing but the breaking of our neck or the forfeiture of our estate; which are circumstances, says he, that nowise concern us. Thus the STOICS join a philosophical enthusiasm to a religious superstition. The force of their mind, being all turned to the side of morals, unbent itself in that of religion.<sup>75</sup>

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23 PLATO<sup>76</sup> introduces SOCRATES affirming, that the accusation of impiety raised against him was owing entirely to his rejecting such fables, as those of SATURN's castrating his father, URANUS, and JUPITER's dethroning SATURN: Yet in a subsequent dialogue,<sup>77</sup> SOCRATES confesses, that the doctrine of the mortality of the soul was the received opinion of the people. Is there here any contradiction? Yes, surely: But the contradiction is not in PLATO; it is in the people, whose religious principles in general are always composed of the most discordant parts; especially in an age, when superstition sate so easy and light upon them.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> CICERO, de Divin. lib. 1. cap. 3 & 7.

<sup>73</sup> Lib. 1. § 17.

<sup>74</sup> Ench. § 17.

<sup>75</sup> The STOICS, I own, were not quite orthodox in the established religion; but one may see, from these instances, that they went a great way: And the people undoubtedly went every length.

<sup>76</sup> EUTYPHRO.

<sup>77</sup> PHÆDO.

<sup>78</sup> XENOPHON's conduct, as related by himself, is, at once, an incontestable proof of the general credulity of mankind in those ages, and the incoherencies, in all ages, of men's opinions in religious matters. That great captain and philosopher, the disciple of SOCRATES, and one who has delivered some of the most refined sentiments with regard to a deity, gave all the following marks of vulgar, pagan superstition. By SOCRATES's advice, he consulted the oracle of DELPHI, before he would engage in the expedition of CYRUS. De exped. lib. 3. p. 294. ex edit. Leuncl. Sees a dream the night after the generals were seized; which he pays great regard to, but thinks ambiguous. Id. p. 295. He and the whole army regard sneezing as a very lucky omen. Id. p. 300. Has another dream, when he comes to the river CENTRITES, which his fellow-general, CHIROSOPHUS, also pays great regard to. Id. lib. 4. p. 323. The GREEKS, suffering from a cold north wind, sacrifice to it; and the historian observes, that it immediately abated. Id. p. 329. XENOPHON consults the sacrifices in

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24 The same CICERO, who affected, in his own family, to appear a devout religionist, makes no scruple, in a public court of judicature, of treating the doctrine of a future state as a ridiculous fable, to which no body could give any attention.<sup>79</sup> SALLUST<sup>80</sup> represents CÆSAR as speaking the same language in the open senate.<sup>81</sup>

25 But that all these freedoms implied not a total and universal infidelity and scepticism amongst the people, is too apparent to be denied. Though some parts of the national religion hung loose upon the minds of men, other parts adhered more closely to them: And it was the chief business of the sceptical philosophers to show, that there was no more foundation for one than for the other. This is the artifice of COTTA in the dialogues concerning the *nature of the gods*. He refutes the whole system of mythology by leading the orthodox gradually, from the more momentous stories, which were believed, to the more frivolous, which every one ridiculed: From the gods to the goddesses; from the goddesses to the nymphs; from the nymphs to the fawns and satyrs. His master, CARNEADES, had employed the same method of reasoning.<sup>82</sup>

26 Upon the whole, the greatest and most observable differences between a *traditional, mythological religion, and a systematical, scholastic one*, are two:

secret, before he would form any resolution with himself about settling a colony. Lib. 5. p. 359. He was himself a very skilful augur. Id. p. 361. Is determined by the victims to refuse the sole command of the army which was offered him. Lib. 6. p. 372. CLEANDER, the SPARTAN, though very desirous of it, refuses it for the same reason. Id. p. 392. XENOPHON mentions an old dream with the interpretation given him, when he first joined CYRUS. p. 373. Mentions also the place of HERCULES's descent into hell as believing it, and says the marks of it are still remaining. Id. p. 375. Had almost starved the army, rather than lead them to the field against the auspices. Id. p. 382, 383. His friend, EUCLIDES, the augur, would not believe that he had brought no money from the expedition; till he (EUCLIDES) sacrificed, and then he saw the matter clearly in the Exta. Lib. 7. p. 425. The same philosopher, proposing a project of mines for the encrease of the ATHENIAN revenues, advises them first to consult the oracle. De rat. red. p. 932. That all this devotion was not a farce, in order to serve a political purpose, appears both from the facts themselves, and from the genius of that age, when little or nothing could be gained by hypocrisy. Besides, XENOPHON, as appears from his Memorabilia, was a kind of heretic in those times, which no political devotee ever is. It is for the same reason, I maintain, that NEWTON, LOCKE, CLARKE, &c. being *Arians* or *Socinians*, were very sincere in the creed they professed: And I always oppose this argument to some libertines, who will needs have it, that it was impossible but that these philosophers must have been hypocrites.

<sup>79</sup> Pro CLUENTIO, cap. 61.

<sup>80</sup> De bello CATILIN.

<sup>81</sup> CICERO (Tusc. quæst. lib. 1. cap. 5, 6.) and SENECA (epist. 24.), as also JUVENAL (satyr. 2.) maintain that there is no boy or old woman so ridiculous as to believe the poets in their accounts of a future state. Why then does LUCRETIUS so highly exalt his master for freeing us from these terrors? Perhaps the generality of mankind were then in the disposition of CEPHALUS in PLATO (de rep. lib. 1.) who while he was young and healthful could ridicule these stories; but as soon as he became old and infirm, began to entertain apprehensions of their truth. This we may observe not to be unusual even at present.

<sup>82</sup> SEXT. EMPIR. advers. mathem. lib. 9.

The former is often more reasonable, as consisting only of a multitude of stories, which, however groundless, imply no express absurdity and demonstrative contradiction; and sits also so easy and light on men's minds, that, though it may be as universally received, it happily makes no such deep impression on the affections and understanding.

## SECTION 13

### Impious Conceptions of the Divine Nature in Popular Religions of Both Kinds

- 1 THE primary religion of mankind arises chiefly from an anxious fear of future events; and what ideas will naturally be entertained of invisible, unknown powers, while men lie under dismal apprehensions of any kind, may easily be conceived. Every image of vengeance, severity, cruelty, and malice must occur and must augment the ghastliness and horror, which oppresses the amazed religionist. A panic having once seized the mind, the active fancy still farther multiplies the objects of terror; while that profound darkness, or, what is worse, that glimmering light, with which we are environed, represents the spectres of divinity under the most dreadful appearances imaginable. And no idea of perverse wickedness can be framed, which those terrified devotees do not readily, without scruple, apply to their deity.  
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- 2 This appears the natural state of religion, when surveyed in one light. But if we consider, on the other hand, that spirit of praise and eulogy, which necessarily has place in all religions, and which is the consequence of these very terrors, we must expect a quite contrary system of theology to prevail. Every virtue, every excellence, must be ascribed to the divinity, and no exaggeration will be deemed sufficient to reach those perfections, with which he is endowed. Whatever strains of panegyric can be invented, are immediately embraced, without consulting any arguments or phænomena: It is esteemed a sufficient confirmation of them, that they give us more magnificent ideas of the divine objects of our worship and adoration.  
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- 3 Here therefore is a kind of contradiction between the different principles of human nature, which enter into religion. Our natural terrors present the notion of a devilish and malicious deity: Our propensity to adulation leads us to acknowledge an excellent and divine. And the influence of these opposite principles are various, according to the different situation of the human understanding.
- 4 In very barbarous and ignorant nations, such as the AFRICANS and INDIANS, nay even the JAPONESE, who can form no extensive ideas of power and knowledge, worship may be paid to a being, whom they confess to be wicked and detestable; though they may be cautious, perhaps, of pronouncing this  
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judgment of him in public, or in his temple, where he may be supposed to hear their reproaches.

Such rude, imperfect ideas of the Divinity adhere long to all idolaters; and it may safely be affirmed, that the GREEKS themselves never got entirely rid of them. It is remarked by XENOPHON,<sup>83</sup> in praise of SOCRATES, that this philosopher assented not to the vulgar opinion, which supposed the gods to know some things, and be ignorant of others: He maintained, that they knew every thing; what was done, said, or even thought. But as this was a strain of philosophy<sup>84</sup> much above the conception of his countrymen, we need not be surprised, if very frankly, in their books and conversation, they blamed the deities, whom they worshipped in their temples. It is observable, that HERODOTUS in particular scruples not, in many passages, to ascribe envy to the gods; a sentiment, of all others, the most suitable to a mean and devilish nature. The pagan hymns, however, sung in public worship, contained nothing but epithets of praise; even while the actions ascribed to the gods were the most barbarous and detestable. When TIMOTHEUS, the poet, recited a hymn to DIANA, in which he enumerated, with the greatest eulogies, all the actions and attributes of that cruel, capricious goddess: "May your daughter," said one present, "become such as the deity whom you celebrate."<sup>85</sup>

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But as men farther exalt their idea of their divinity; it is their notion of his power and knowledge only, not of his goodness, which is improved. On the contrary, in proportion to the supposed extent of his science and authority, their terrors naturally augment; while they believe, that no secrecy can conceal them from his scrutiny, and that even the inmost recesses of their breast lie open before him. They must then be careful not to form expressly any sentiment of blame and disapprobation. All must be applause, ravishment, extacy. And while their gloomy apprehensions make them ascribe to him measures of conduct, which, in human creatures, would be highly blamed, they must still affect to praise and admire that conduct in the object of their devotional addresses. Thus it may safely be affirmed, that popular religions are really, in the conception of their more vulgar votaries, a species of dæmonism; and the higher the deity is exalted in power and knowledge, the lower of course is he depressed in goodness and benevolence; whatever epithets of praise may be bestowed on him by

<sup>83</sup> Mem. lib. 1.

<sup>84</sup> It was considered among the ancients, as a very extraordinary, philosophical paradox, that the presence of the gods was not confined to the heavens, but was extended every where; as we learn from LUCIAN. HERMOTIMUS sive de sectis.

<sup>85</sup> PLUTARCH. de superstitione.

his amazed adorers. Among idolaters, the words may be false, and belie the secret opinion: But among more exalted religionists, the opinion itself contracts a kind of falsehood, and belies the inward sentiment. The heart secretly detests such measures of cruel and implacable vengeance; but the judgment dares not but pronounce them perfect and adorable. And the additional misery of this inward struggle aggravates all the other terrors, by which these unhappy victims to superstition are for ever haunted.

7 LUCIAN<sup>86</sup> observes, that a young man, who reads the history of the gods in HOMER or HESIOD, and finds their factions, wars, injustice, incest, adultery, and other immoralities so highly celebrated, is much surprized afterwards, when he comes into the world, to observe that punishments are by law inflicted on the same actions, which he had been taught to ascribe to superior beings. The contradiction is still perhaps stronger between the representations given us by some later religions and our natural ideas of generosity, lenity, impartiality, and justice; and in proportion to the multiplied terrors of these religions, the barbarous conceptions of the Divinity are multiplied upon us.<sup>87</sup> Nothing can preserve untainted the

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<sup>86</sup> Necyomantia.

<sup>87</sup> BACCHUS, a divine being, is represented by the heathen mythology as the inventor of dancing and the theatre. Plays were anciently even a part of public worship on the most solemn occasions, and often employed in times of pestilence, to appease the offended deities. But they have been zealously proscribed by the godly in later ages; and the playhouse, according to a learned divine, is the porch of hell.

But in order to show more evidently, that it is possible for a religion to represent the divinity in still a more immoral and unamiable light than he was pictured by the ancients, we shall cite a long passage from an author of taste and imagination, who was surely no enemy to CHRISTIANITY. It is the Chevalier RAMSAY, a writer, who had so laudable an inclination to be orthodox, that his reason never found any difficulty, even in the doctrines which freethinkers scruple the most, the trinity, incarnation, and satisfaction: His humanity alone, of which he seems to have had a great stock, rebelled against the doctrines of eternal reprobation and predestination. He expresses himself thus: "What strange ideas," says he, "would an Indian, or a Chinese philosopher have of our holy religion, if they judged by the schemes given of it by our modern freethinkers, and pharisaical doctors of all sects? According to the odious and too *vulgar* system of these incredulous scoffers and credulous scribblers, 'The God of the Jews is a most cruel, unjust, partial and fantastical being. He created, about 6000 years ago, a man and a woman, and placed them in a fine garden of ASIA, of which there are no remains. This garden was furnished with all sorts of trees, fountains, and flowers. He allowed them the use of all the fruits of this beautiful garden, except one, that was planted in the midst thereof, and that had in it a secret virtue of preserving them in continual health and vigour of body and mind, of exalting their natural powers and making them wise. The devil entered into the body of a serpent, and solicited the first woman to eat of this forbidden fruit; she engaged her husband to do the same. To punish this slight curiosity and natural desire of life and knowledge, God not only threw our first parents out of paradise, but he condemned all their posterity to temporal misery, and the greatest part of them to eternal pains, though the souls of these innocent children have no more relation to that of ADAM than to those of NERO and MAHOMET; since, according to the scholastic drivellers, fabulists, and mythologists, all souls are created pure, and infused immediately into mortal bodies,

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genuine principles of morals in our judgment of human conduct, but the absolute necessity of these principles to the existence of society. If common conception can indulge princes in a system of ethics, somewhat different from that which should regulate private persons; how much more those superior beings, whose attributes, views, and nature are so totally unknown to us? "Sunt superis sua jura."<sup>88</sup> The gods have maxims of justice peculiar to themselves.

so soon as the foetus is formed. To accomplish the barbarous, partial decree of predestination and reprobation, God abandoned all nations to darkness, idolatry and superstition, without any saving knowledge or salutary graces; unless it was one particular nation, whom he chose as his peculiar people. This chosen nation was, however, the most stupid, ungrateful, rebellious, and perfidious of all nations. After God had thus kept the far greater part of all the human species, during near 4000 years, in a reprobate state, he changed all of a sudden, and took a fancy for other nations besides the JEWS. Then he sent his only begotten Son to the world, under a human form, to appease his wrath, satisfy his vindictive justice, and die for the pardon of sin. Very few nations, however, have heard of this gospel and all the rest, though left in invincible ignorance, are damned without exception, or any possibility of remission. The greatest part of those who have heard of it, have changed only some speculative notions about God, and some external forms in worship: For, in other respects, the bulk of Christians have continued as corrupt, as the rest of mankind in their morals; yea, so much the more perverse and criminal, that their lights were greater. Unless it be a very small select number, all other Christians, like the pagans, will be for ever damned; the great sacrifice offered up for them will become void and of no effect. God will take delight for ever in their torments and blasphemies; and though he can, by one *fiat*, change their hearts, yet they will remain for ever unconverted and unconvertible, because he will be for ever unappeasable and irreconcileable. It is true, that all this makes God odious, a hater of souls, rather than a lover of them; a cruel, vindictive tyrant, an impotent or a wrathful daemon, rather than an all-powerful, beneficent Father of spirits: Yet all this is a mystery. He has secret reasons for his conduct, that are impenetrable; and though he appears unjust and barbarous, yet we must believe the contrary, because what is injustice, crime, cruelty, and the blackest malice in us, is in him justice, mercy, and sovereign goodness.' Thus the incredulous freethinkers, the judaizing Christians, and the fatalistic doctors have disfigured and dishonoured the sublime mysteries of our holy faith; thus, they have confounded the nature of good and evil; transformed the most monstrous passions into divine attributes, and surpassed the pagans in blasphemy, by ascribing to the eternal nature, as perfections, what makes the most horrid crimes amongst men. The grosser pagans contented themselves with divinizing lust, incest, and adultery; but the predestinarian doctors have divinized cruelty, wrath, fury, vengeance, and all the blackest vices." See the Chevalier RAMSAY's Philosophical Principles of natural and revealed Religion, Part II. p. 403.

The same author asserts, in other places, that the *Arminian* and *Molinist* schemes serve very little to mend the matter: And having thus thrown himself out of all received sects of CHRISTIANITY, he is obliged to advance a system of his own, which is a kind of ORIGENISM, and supposes the pre-existence of the souls both of men and beasts, and the eternal salvation and conversion of all men, beasts, and devils. But this notion, being quite peculiar to himself, we need not treat of. I thought the opinions of this ingenious author very curious; but I pretend not to warrant the justness of them.

<sup>88</sup> OVID. Metam. lib. 9. 500.

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## SECTION 14

### Bad Influence of Popular Religions on Morality

- 1 HERE I cannot forbear observing a fact, which may be worth the attention of such as make human nature the object of their enquiry. It is certain, that, in every religion, however sublime the verbal definition which it gives of its divinity, many of the votaries, perhaps the greatest number, will still seek the divine favour, not by virtue and good morals, which alone can be acceptable to a perfect being, but either by frivolous observances, by intemperate zeal, by rapturous extasies, or by the belief of mysterious and absurd opinions. The least part of the *Sadder*, as well as of the *Pentateuch*, consists in precepts of morality; and we may also be assured, that that part was always the least observed and regarded. When the old ROMANS were attacked with a pestilence, they never ascribed their sufferings to their vices, or dreamed of repentance and amendment. They never thought that they were the general robbers of the world, whose ambition and avarice made desolate the earth, and reduced opulent nations to want and beggary. They only created a dictator,<sup>89</sup> in order to drive a nail into a door; and by that means, they thought that they had sufficiently appeased their incensed deity.
- 2 In ÆGINA, one faction forming a conspiracy, barbarously and treacherously assassinated seven hundred of their fellow-citizens; and carried their fury so far, that, one miserable fugitive having fled to the temple, they cut off his hands, by which he clung to the gates, and carrying him out of holy ground, immediately murdered him. “By this impiety,” says HERODOTUS,<sup>90</sup> (not by the other many cruel assassinations) “they offended the gods, and contracted an inexpiable guilt.”
- 3 Nay, if we should suppose, what never happens, that a popular religion were found, in which it was expressly declared, that nothing but morality could gain the divine favour; if an order of priests were instituted to inculcate this opinion, in daily sermons, and with all the arts of persuasion; yet so inveterate are the people’s prejudices, that, for want of some other superstition, they would make the very attendance on these sermons the essentials of religion, rather than place them in virtue and good morals. The

<sup>89</sup> Called “Dictator clavis figendæ causa.” T. LIVII, lib. 7. cap. 3.

<sup>90</sup> Lib. 6.

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sublime prologue of ZALEUCUS's laws<sup>91</sup> inspired not the LOCRIANS, so far as we can learn, with any sounder notions of the measures of acceptance with the deity, than were familiar to the other GREEKS.

4 This observation, then, holds universally: But still one may be at some loss to account for it. It is not sufficient to observe, that the people, every where, degrade their deities into a similitude with themselves, and consider them merely as a species of human creatures, somewhat more potent and intelligent. This will not remove the difficulty. For there is no *man* so stupid, as that, judging by his natural reason, he would not esteem virtue and honesty the most valuable qualities, which any person could possess. Why not ascribe the same sentiment to his deity? Why not make all religion, or the chief part of it, to consist in these attainments?

5 Nor is it satisfactory to say, that the practice of morality is more difficult than that of superstition; and is therefore rejected. For, not to mention the excessive penances of the *Brachmans* and *Talapoins*; it is certain, that the *Rhamadan* of the TURKS, during which the poor wretches, for many days, often in the hottest months of the year, and in some of the hottest climates of the world, remain without eating or drinking from the rising to the setting sun; this *Rhamadan*, I say, must be more severe than the practice of any moral duty, even to the most vicious and depraved of mankind. The four Lents of the MUSCOVITES, and the austerities of some ROMAN CATHOLICS, appear more disagreeable than meekness and benevolence. In short, all virtue, when men are reconciled to it by ever so little practice, is agreeable: All superstition is for ever odious and burdensome.

6 Perhaps, the following account may be received as a true solution of the difficulty. The duties, which a man performs as a friend or parent, seem merely owing to his benefactor or children; nor can he be wanting to these duties, without breaking through all the ties of nature and morality. A strong inclination may prompt him to the performance: A sentiment of order and moral obligation joins its force to these natural ties: And the whole man, if truly virtuous, is drawn to his duty, without any effort or endeavour. Even with regard to the virtues, which are more austere, and more founded on reflection, such as public spirit, filial duty, temperance, or integrity; the moral obligation, in our apprehension, removes all pretension to religious merit; and the virtuous conduct is deemed no more than what we owe to society and to ourselves. In all this, a superstitious man finds nothing, which he has properly performed for the sake of his deity, or which can peculiarly recommend him to the divine favour and protection. He considers not,

<sup>91</sup> To be found in DIOD. SIC. lib. 12.

that the most genuine method of serving the Divinity is by promoting the happiness of his creatures. He still looks out for some more immediate service of the Supreme Being, in order to allay those terrors, with which he is haunted. And any practice, recommended to him, which either serves to no purpose in life, or offers the strongest violence to his natural inclinations; that practice he will the more readily embrace, on account of those very circumstances, which should make him absolutely reject it. It seems the more purely religious, because it proceeds from no mixture of any other motive or consideration. And if, for its sake, he sacrifices much of his ease and quiet, his claim of merit appears still to rise upon him, in proportion to the zeal and devotion which he discovers. In restoring a loan, or paying a debt, his divinity is nowise beholden to him; because these acts of justice are what he was bound to perform, and what many would have performed, were there no god in the universe. But if he fast a day, or give himself a sound whipping; this has a direct reference, in his opinion, to the service of God. No other motive could engage him to such austerities. By these distinguished marks of devotion, he has now acquired the divine favour; and may expect, in recompence, protection and safety in this world, and eternal happiness in the next.

7 Hence the greatest crimes have been found, in many instances, compatible with a superstitious piety and devotion: Hence it is justly regarded as unsafe to draw any certain inference in favour of a man's morals from the fervour or strictness of his religious exercises, even though he himself believe them sincere. Nay, it has been observed, that enormities of the blackest dye have been rather apt to produce superstitious terrors, and encrease the religious passion. BOMILCAR, having formed a conspiracy for assassinating at once the whole senate of CARTHAGE, and invading the liberties of his country, lost the opportunity, from a continual regard to omens and prophecies. *Those who undertake the most criminal and most dangerous enterprizes are commonly the most superstitious;* as an ancient historian<sup>92</sup> remarks on this occasion. Their devotion and spiritual faith rise with their fears. CATILINE was not contented with the established deities, and received rites of the national religion: His anxious terrors made him seek new inventions of this kind;<sup>93</sup> which he never probably had dreamed of, had he remained a good citizen, and obedient to the laws of his country.

8 To which we may add, that, after the commission of crimes, there arise remorses and secret horrors, which give no rest to the mind, but make it have recourse to religious rites and ceremonies, as expiations of its offences.

<sup>92</sup> DIOD. SIC. lib. 20.

<sup>93</sup> CIC. CATIL. I. SALLUST. de bello CATIL.

Whatever weakens or disorders the internal frame promotes the interests of superstition: And nothing is more destructive to them than a manly, steady virtue, which either preserves us from disastrous, melancholy accidents, or teaches us to bear them. During such calm sun-shine of the mind, these spectres of false divinity never make their appearance. On the other hand, while we abandon ourselves to the natural undisciplined suggestions of our timid and anxious hearts, every kind of barbarity is ascribed to the Supreme Being, from the terrors with which we are agitated; and every kind of caprice, from the methods which we embrace in order to appease him. *Barbarity, caprice*; these qualities, however nominally disguised, we may universally observe, form the ruling character of the deity in popular religions. Even priests, instead of correcting these depraved ideas of mankind, have often been found ready to foster and encourage them. The more tremendous the divinity is represented, the more tame and submissive do men become to his ministers: And the more unaccountable the measures of acceptance required by him, the more necessary does it become to abandon our natural reason, and yield to their ghostly guidance and direction. Thus it may be allowed, that the artifices of men aggravate our natural infirmities and follies of this kind, but never originally beget them. Their root strikes deeper into the mind, and springs from the essential and universal properties of human nature.

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## SECTION 15

### General Corollary

- 1 THOUGH the stupidity of men, barbarous and uninstructed, be so great, that they may not see a sovereign author in the more obvious works of nature, to which they are so much familiarized; yet it scarcely seems possible, that any one of good understanding should reject that idea, when once it is suggested to him. A purpose, an intention, a design is evident in every thing; and when our comprehension is so far enlarged as to contemplate the first rise of this visible system, we must adopt, with the strongest conviction, the idea of some intelligent cause or author. The uniform maxims too, which prevail throughout the whole frame of the universe, naturally, if not necessarily, lead us to conceive this intelligence as single and undivided, where the prejudices of education oppose not so reasonable a theory. Even the contrarieties of nature, by discovering themselves every where, become proofs of some consistent plan, and establish one single purpose or intention, however inexplicable and incomprehensible.
- 2 Good and ill are universally intermingled and confounded; happiness and misery, wisdom and folly, virtue and vice. Nothing is pure and entirely of a piece. All advantages are attended with disadvantages. An universal compensation prevails in all conditions of being and existence. And it is not possible for us, by our most chimerical wishes, to form the idea of a station or situation altogether desirable. The draughts of life, according to the poet's fiction, are always mixed from the vessels on each hand of JUPITER: Or if any cup be presented altogether pure, it is drawn only, as the same poet tells us, from the left-handed vessel.
- 3 The more exquisite any good is, of which a small specimen is afforded us, the sharper is the evil, allied to it; and few exceptions are found to this uniform law of nature. The most sprightly wit borders on madness; the highest effusions of joy produce the deepest melancholy; the most ravishing pleasures are attended with the most cruel lassitude and disgust; the most flattering hopes make way for the severest disappointments. And in general, no course of life has such safety (for happiness is not to be dreamed of) as the temperate and moderate, which maintains, as far as possible, a mediocrity, and a kind of insensibility, in every thing.

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4 As the good, the great, the sublime, the ravishing are found eminently in the genuine principles of theism; it may be expected, from the analogy of nature, that the base, the absurd, the mean, the terrifying will be equally discovered in religious fictions and chimeras.

5 The universal propensity to believe in invisible, intelligent power, if not an original instinct, being at least a general attendant of human nature, may be considered as a kind of mark or stamp, which the divine workman has set upon his work; and nothing surely can more dignify mankind, than to be thus selected from all other parts of the creation, and to bear the image or impression of the universal Creator. But consult this image, as it appears in the popular religions of the world. How is the Deity disfigured in our representations of him! What caprice, absurdity, and immorality are attributed to him! How much is he degraded even below the character, which we should naturally, in common life, ascribe to a man of sense and virtue!

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6 What a noble privilege is it of human reason to attain the knowledge of the Supreme Being; and, from the visible works of nature, be enabled to infer so sublime a principle as its supreme Creator? But turn the reverse of the medal. Survey most nations and most ages. Examine the religious principles, which have, in fact, prevailed in the world. You will scarcely be persuaded, that they are any thing but sick men's dreams: Or perhaps will regard them more as the playsome whimsies of monkies in human shape, than the serious, positive, dogmatical asseverations of a being, who dignifies himself with the name of rational.

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7 Hear the verbal protestations of all men: Nothing so certain as their religious tenets. Examine their lives: You will scarcely think that they repose the smallest confidence in them.

8 The greatest and truest zeal gives us no security against hypocrisy: The most open impiety is attended with a secret dread and compunction.

9 No theological absurdities so glaring that they have not, sometimes, been embraced by men of the greatest and most cultivated understanding. No religious precepts so rigorous that they have not been adopted by the most voluptuous and most abandoned of men.

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10 *Ignorance is the mother of Devotion:* A maxim that is proverbial, and confirmed by general experience. Look out for a people, entirely destitute of religion: If you find them at all, be assured, that they are but few degrees removed from brutes.

11 What so pure as some of the morals, included in some theological systems? What so corrupt as some of the practices, to which these systems give rise?

12 The comfortable views, exhibited by the belief of futurity, are ravishing and delightful. But how quickly vanish on the appearance of its terrors, which keep a more firm and durable possession of the human mind?

13 The whole is a riddle, an ænigma, an inexplicable mystery. Doubt, uncertainty, suspense of judgment appear the only result of our most accurate scrutiny, concerning this subject. But such is the frailty of human reason, and such the irresistible contagion of opinion, that even this deliberate doubt could scarcely be upheld; did we not enlarge our view, and opposing one species of superstition to another, set them a quarrelling; while we ourselves, during their fury and contention, happily make our escape, into the calm, though obscure, regions of philosophy.

27.7 **natural philosophy]** Natural philosophy is the study of *physical* nature and history, whereas moral philosophy is the study of *human* nature and history. These labels can be confusing when applied to the passions. Hume's stated objective in *THN* (Introduction 6–7; cf. *Abstract* 1–3) of developing a science of human nature could be construed as making moral philosophy parallel to natural, as Hume himself suggested in *Abstract* 1: ‘tis at least worth while to try if the science of *man* will not admit of the same accuracy which several parts of natural philosophy are found susceptible of.’

Natural philosophy had been associated by others with enquiry into the passions and human nature. For example, Reynolds, *Treatise of the Passions and Faculties of the Soule* 6, held that a *natural* discourse on the passions enquires into ‘their essential *Properties*, their Ebbes and Flowes, their Springings and Decayes, the manner of their several *Impressions*, the Physical *Effects* which are wrought by them, and the like’; whereas a *moral* discourse enquires into the role of reason, the connection between the passions and good and evil, and how the passions are suppressed, slackened, and otherwise governed. Shortly after Reynolds's work was published, Descartes wrote a letter that was included in the ‘Prefatory Letters’ to *Passions of the Soul*, stating that ‘My intention was to explain the passions only as a natural philosopher, and not as a rhetorician or even as a moral philosopher’ (Letter, Egmont, 14 Aug. 1649; *Philosophical Writings*, 1: 327).

## THE NATURAL HISTORY OF RELIGION

31.0 **NATURAL HISTORY]** Hume does not hereafter use or define the term ‘natural history’ (though he four times cites Pliny's *Natural History*). Eighteenth-century conceptions of natural history are discussed by the editor in an appendix to this volume (‘The Intellectual Background: A Concise Account’, pp. 215–20).

## INTRODUCTION

33.3 **origin in human nature]** Scholars before and during Hume's period were concerned with the foundations of religion in human nature. They considered why, throughout history, persons had been driven to forms of religious belief, credulity, superstition, and zealotry. Theories of human nature were sometimes invoked to provide an answer. Two writers in this tradition were John Trenchard (1662–1723; English political writer), *The Natural History of Superstition*—the first natural history concerned with religious phenomena—and Bernard Fontenelle,<sup>B</sup> *De l'Origine des fables*, esp. pp. 11–17. For other relevant works, see the above mentioned appendix to this volume (‘The Intellectual Background: A Concise Account’, pp. 217 ff.).

33.10 **belief... in all ages]** Arguments from universal belief in God to the existence of God had long been found in theological writers. See the appendix

to this volume on Gerard Vossius and Herbert of Cherbury ('The Intellectual Background: A Concise Account', 205–28).

33.13 Some nations . . . entertained no sentiments of Religion, if travellers and historians may be credited] It is unknown which nations, travellers, and historians Hume means (if any, in particular). However, at 'A Dialogue' 12 (placed at the end of *EPM*), Hume mentions one possible nation, viz. the 'TOPINAMBOUES' or Tupinamba Indians, who were considered primitive and without religion, based on the reports of travellers. A detailed account of this cannibalistic tribe of Brazil is found in the writings of Hans Staden, a Dutchman held captive by these people (in 1557) and later freed by the French. Staden depicts them as having beliefs in soothsayers, who help them devise rattles to which a tribe member prays 'for what he desires, just as we pray to the true God. These rattles are their gods, for they know nothing of the true God' (Staden, *True History*, ch. 22, pp. 148–51). Many of Staden's reports were confirmed by another traveller, Jean de Léry, who was in Brazil at the same time on a Huguenot expedition. In *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil* (1578), ch. 16, he presents the Tupinamba Indians as a rare exception to the general truth that all peoples have a sense that there is a divine being. He asserts categorically that they 'live without any religion at all', meaning that they neither confess nor worship idols or gods of any sort. He acknowledges that there is 'what one might call religion', but insists that it is controlled by charlatans ('false prophets') and exists in complete ignorance of the divine, sacred texts, accounts of creation, and the like. John Locke had also mentioned the customs of the Tupinamba Indians and listed several sources of his information (*Essay* 1.3.9).

33.17 springs not from an original instinct] At *Abstract* 6 Hume proposes that 'all our passions are a kind of natural instincts, derived from nothing but the original constitution of the human mind'. (Cf. his uses of 'natural instinct' in *EHU* 5.8; 9.3; 12.7; 12.16, 25.) See also Hume's letter of June 1743, to William Mure of Caldwell, *Letters*, 1: 51, where he observes that 'the Deity . . . is not the natural Object of any Passion or Affection'. A much discussed writer who held that religion is innate, natural, or instinctual in humans was Herbert of Cherbury, *De veritate* 5, 9 (esp. pp. 116–17, 289–304). He held that various religious principles are latent in human nature, though people need experience to deliver them to consciousness. See also George Turnbull (1698–1749; regent at Marischal College, Aberdeen), *Principles of Moral Philosophy* 7.

## SECTION 1: That Polytheism Was the Primary Religion of Men

34.2 polytheism or idolatry] In the early editions of *NHR*, Hume used 'polytheism' and 'idolatry' synonymously. In the 1757–70 edns., the words 'idolatry' and 'idolatrous' appeared frequently; in the 1772 edn., they were systematically

(but incompletely) replaced by the words ‘polytheism’ and ‘polytheistic’. Hume moves freely in his writings between the two sets of words, as did other writers of the period. However, he appears not to assume that idolatry is always polytheistic. For example, in his *History of England* Hume writes that ‘The protestants, far from tolerating the religion of their ancestors [Roman Catholicism], regard it as an impious and detestable idolatry’, and that ‘The general assembly importuned [Mary, Queen of Scots] anew to change her religion; to renounce the blasphemous idolatry of the mass’ (ch. 37 [3: 434]; ch. 39 [4: 71]).

**34.3 most ancient religion]** This thesis drew as much discussion in commentaries on *NHR* during Hume’s lifetime as any thesis in the work. See Sect. 9 of the editor’s Introduction (pp. cxxii ff., cxxvii, and cxxix), which discusses relevant commentary by the Revd (later Bishop) William Warburton, Voltaire, and the anonymously published ‘Remarks upon the Natural History of Religion by Mr. Hume’.

**34.6 1700 years ago all mankind were polytheists]** A similar thesis about common belief, with a qualification in the case of Judaism, had been discussed in considerable detail by Ralph Cudworth: ‘All the Nations of the World heretofore (except a small and inconsiderable handful of the Jews) together with their Wisest men and greatest Philosophers, were generally look’d upon as Polytheists’ (*True Intellectual System of the Universe* 1.4.11 ff.; Cudworth did not hold this belief himself, and indeed regarded it as ‘irrational’).

Though no commentator during Hume’s lifetime mentioned his dating of ‘1700 years ago’, more than one commentator pointed out that the relevant history of monotheism is ‘Mosaic’ (Jewish), and therefore that monotheism is of an older date than Hume seems to assume. The thesis that polytheism can be traced to events subsequent to the origins of the Mosaic tradition had often been discussed. See, e.g., Gerard Vossius, *De Theologia gentili*; Newton, *Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended*; Herbert of Cherbury, *Pagan Religion* 14 (Herbert corresponded with Vossius on the subject); and Chevalier de Ramsay,<sup>B</sup> *The Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion*, vol. 2.

A scheme of precise dating, according to traditional Christian beliefs, had been provided in Jacques Bossuet, *An Universal History: From the Beginning of the World*, pts. 1 and 2. Benoit de Maillet, in a treatise lauding natural history (published in 1748 in French; 1750 in English), scorned traditional biblical chronology and all forms of religion-induced dating, treating such schemes as fables and romances that were ill informed about originating causes. See his *Telliamo... relating to Natural History and Philosophy*, esp. Preface, pp. xiv–xv.

**35.19 causes of such objects... never strike our attention or curiosity]** Comparable observations on our lack of curiosity about the causes of familiar objects appear in Cicero, *De natura deorum* 2.38, where Cicero discusses the place of arguments that proceed from the order and frame of the universe to a transcendent and divine source.

35.22 **ADAM... represented by MILTON]** The reference is to John Milton, *Paradise Lost* 8, lines 250–82. Milton's character Adam reacts with wonder (lines 275–9):

Ye Hills and Dales, ye Rivers, Woods, and Plaines,  
And yee that live and move, fair Creatures, tell,  
Tell, if ye saw, how came I thus, how here?  
Not of my self; by some great Maker then,  
In goodness and in power præminent.

Adam serves for Hume, in other works, as a model of the rational individual; see *THN* 2.1.6.9; *Abstract* 11–14; *EHU* 4.6; and *DP* 2.47.

35.26 **barbarous, necessitous animal]** Cf. the similar language and accounts of the necessitous condition or circumstance of humankind in *THN* 3.2.2.17–20 and *EPM* 3.4.

36.22 **HERCULES, THESEUS, BACCHUS]** The historical origins of these legends are uncertain. Some evidence indicates that Hercules was a historical figure. The legend of Theseus also may have roots in a human person. Stories about Bacchus apparently did not. Hercules, according to some myths, was made a god by Zeus on his mortal death. As a cult figure, he was sometimes worshipped as a god. Theseus is the son of Poseidon, and founder-king of Athens. Legends about Theseus's traits were sometimes modelled on those of Hercules. Bacchus—god of wine, vegetation, and fertility—is among the most popular sources of myth and story in classical literature. The legends of Hercules and Theseus are discussed in ann. 63.15, on *NHR* 10.3. Hume mentions both Bacchus and Theseus in a related context in his essay 'Of Parties in General' 1.

36.35 **superstitions of the heathen world]** 'Superstition' commonly refers, in Hume's usage, to extravagant and unfounded religious beliefs and practices and beliefs related to such practices (including vain fears of a deity, idolatrous or excessive worship, and many silly or foolish beliefs). In his *History of England* Hume comments, during a discussion of the ancient Saxons, on how 'all' superstitions are viewed by other persons. He reports that the Saxons 'believed firmly in spells and enchantments, and admitted in general a system of doctrines, which they held as sacred, but which, like all other superstitions, must carry the air of the wildest extravagance, if propounded to those who are not familiarized to it from their earliest infancy' (ch. 1 [1: 27]). See, further, *NHR* 12.22; *EHU* 1.11 and 11.29; and 'Of Superstition and Enthusiasm'. For a classical discussion, see Plutarch, 'Superstition' (in *Moralia*); this work was influential on the treatments of superstition by Herbert of Cherbury (*Pagan Religion*), Shaftesbury (*Characteristics*, 'Miscellany 2'), and Anthony Collins (1676–1729; English philosopher) (*A Discourse of Free-Thinking*). For other relevant early modern views on superstition, see Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise*, preface; Bayle, *Various Thoughts on the Occasion of a Comet*; Antonius van Dale, *Dissertationes de origine ac progressu idololatriæ et superstitionum*;

John Toland (1670–1722; Irish-born British free-thinker), *Letters to Serena*; and Trenchard, *Natural History of Superstition*.

## SECTION 2: Origin of Polytheism

37.2 **polytheism, the primitive religion]** See ann. 34.2 (on *NHR* 1.2).

37.7 **this vast machine]** Theses about the vast machine and hidden causes in the machine are found at *EHU* 7.8, 22; 8.14, 32; and *NHR* 2.2. For Hume's reflections on the 'whole machine'—i.e. the universe—and the adjustment of its parts, see *Dialogues* 2.5, 18; 7.14; 11.11; 12.5.

37.18 **statue of LAOCOON . . . PLINY]** The reference is to Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 36.4.37–8. Laocoön was a priest of Apollo. The statue, now in the Vatican, depicts Laocoön and his twin sons being killed by serpents. The statue has been attributed to Agesander, Athenodorus, and Polydorus. Pliny apparently believed that the statue was 'cut from one stone'. The statue known to Pliny may have been cut from one stone, but some scholars have proposed that the extant statue was constructed from as many as eight blocks.

37.22 **statuary]** sculptor, one who makes or carves images or statues in stone or wood (though in the eighteenth century this term also meant both *statues as a group* and *the art of making images or statues*).

38.16 **incessant hopes and fears]** See comparable themes about the rise of religion and superstition from hopes and fears (and their exploitation by priests) in Hobbes, *Leviathan* 12; Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise*, preface, and *Ethics* 1, appx.; Fontenelle,<sup>B</sup> *De l'origine des fables*, pp. 13–17, 26; Trenchard, *Natural History of Superstition*, 9 ff., 33–4; and Toland, *Letters to Serena*, 3rd letter. A primitive but influential form of these themes is in Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 1.102–16, 146–58. See, further, the Appendix to this volume, 'The Intellectual Background: A Concise Account', pp. 224–5.

38.20 **JUNO . . . LUCINA . . . NEPTUNE . . . MARS . . . CERES . . . MERCURY]** Roman names are used here, but only the Greek god or goddess possessed some of the particular attributes mentioned. (1) *Juno*: Hera is the Greek goddess of marriage, but the function is also assigned to Juno. (2) *Lucina*: Ilithyia is the Greek goddess of childbirth, but the function is assumed in Roman mythology by Juno. When invoked during childbirth, the name Lucina (light-bringer) is added to the name Juno to mark the particular function of making the child see the light of day. Whereas in Greek mythology Ilithyia and Hera are distinct personages, in Roman mythology Lucina is an aspect of Juno. (3) *Neptune*: In Roman mythology, Neptune is the god of water, whereas Poseidon is god of the sea and is worshipped on all navigational occasions. (4) *Mars*: Scholars have defended several interpretations of the function of Mars in Roman mythology, one of which is god of war. Ares was the Greek god of war. (5) *Ceres*: Roman Ceres is the goddess of agriculture, corn, and grain. Ceres

and Demeter, her Greek equivalent, both protected the fields. (6) *Mercury*: As the god of commerce Mercury finds his Roman equivalent in Hermes.

n. 1.2 PLIN. lib. 2. cap. 7] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 2.5.15. In the edn. of 1526 (see Cat.), the chapter cited by Hume is ch. 7; it is ch. 5 in modern editions. The passage from Pliny may be translated: 'Weak and toiling humanity, mindful of its own feebleness, has formed its gods into distinct divisions, so as to worship according to group the deity each most needs'.

n. 1.2 HESIOD'S . . . lib. 1] Hesiod, *Works and Days*, lines 252–5. Hesiod reports that Zeus has 30,000 spirits on earth to keep watch on the judgements and deeds of mortals. Hume here cites 'lib. 1' of *Works and Days*. During Hume's period *Works and Days* was commonly divided into bk. 1 (1–380) and bk. 2 (381–762); modern editions do not follow this precedent.

n. 1.5 ARIST. PROBL.] Aristotle, *Problems* 33.7, 962<sup>a</sup>21–4. The *Problems*, also published as *Problemata physica*, is considered by many scholars to be an Aristotelian work, but not a work by Aristotle. The cited passage queries why sneezing is considered of divine origin, while coughing and a runny nose are not.

39.4 terror of death] Related claims about the terror of death had been discussed by Hobbes, *Leviathan* 12.5–6, 11; and Trenchard, *Natural History of Superstition*, 9, 33–6, 45. Terror and fear of death played a larger explanatory role in some writings on the nature and origin of religion than they do for Hume. See Toland, *Letters to Serena*. See also ann. 38.16 (on *NHR* 2.4) regarding the role Hume gives to fear and hope, including fear of death.

### Section 3: The Same Subject Continued

40.6 secret and unknown causes] Cf. *NHR* 8.1 and the discussion in *NHR* 4.1 of invisible intelligent power, as well as related themes at *NHR* 2.2; 2.5; 3.4; 5.2; 8.2; 15.5.

40.8 hope and fear] See ann. 38.16 (on *NHR* 2.4).

40.17 ignorant multitude . . . unknown causes] Central features of the thesis in this and the following paragraph are in Trenchard, *Natural History of Superstition*, pp. 9–13; and Fontenelle, *De l'origine des fables*, pp. 13–24.

40.26 transfer to every object . . . natural propensity, if not corrected by experience and reflection] In correspondence with Gilbert Elliot about his *Dialogues*, during the period he may have written *NHR*, Hume maintained that:

[Strong & universal propensities to believe are] somewhat different from our Inclination to find our own Figures in the Clouds, our Face in the Moon, our Passions & Sentiments even in inanimate Matter. Such an Inclination may, & ought to be controul'd, & can never be a legitimate Ground of Assent. . . . As it is usual for us to transfer our own Feelings to

the Objects on which they are dependent, we attach the internal Sentiment to the external Objects. (10 Mar. 1751, *Letters*, 1: 155–6)

Hume mentions the mind's 'great propensity to spread itself on external objects' at THN 1.3.14.24–5.

Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715; French philosopher and theologian) held that the mind has a tendency 'to spread itself onto the objects it considers by clothing them with what it has stripped from itself. . . . Thus, it judges not only that heat and cold are in fire and ice, but also that they are within its own hands' (*Search after Truth* 1.12.5; 5.6; also 1.11.1.1; *Elucidations* 15). Other philosophers had commented on the human tendency to project sentiments or ideas onto objects in the case of heat, sound, colour, and the like. For example, see the discussion of 'translating . . . our Passions to things without us' in Joseph Glanvill (1636–80; English philosopher and clergyman), *Scepsis scientifica* 12; Locke's celebrated discussion of primary and secondary qualities, *Essay* 2.8.8 ff.; and Antoine Arnauld (1612–94; French philosopher, theologian, and mathematician) and Pierre Nicole (1625–95; French theologian and writer on moral subjects) on transporting sensations to objects, *Logic or the Art of Thinking*, first part, ch. 9.

**40.32 sentiment and passion]** 'Sentiment' is an inner sensing, feeling, or emotion—e.g. anger, approval, disgust, sympathy, and compassion. The term was also used in Hume's period to refer to judgement and opinion. No later than 18 Feb. 1751, Hume was pondering the thesis that 'it was neither by Reasoning nor Authority we learn our Religion, but by Sentiment' (correspondence with Gilbert Elliot, *Letters*, 1: 151).

**41.3 river-god or hamadryad]** In classical mythology river-gods are rivers personified. For example, Achelous was god and namesake of the principal river in the south-western mainland of Greece. In this same mythology hamadryads are tree nymphs or the life spirits of trees. When the tree died, the hamadryad was believed to die as well. In ancient Egyptian religion 'hamadryad' refers to objects of veneration that are, in earthly form, animate (e.g. baboons and cobras), rather than inanimate objects like rivers. However, Hume's concern here is apparently with the personification of inanimate natural phenomena.

**41.5 particular genius or invisible power]** A *genius loci* ('genius of the place') was, in ancient belief, a minor god or spirit inhabiting or protecting a certain locality. Localities and institutions in which the Romans exercised authority had their own divine genius or tutelary and controlling spirit. Virgil mentions the 'geniumne loci' at *Aeneid* 5.95.

**41.26 CORIOLANUS in DIONYSIUS,<sup>2</sup>**] Footnote reference: Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 8.2.2. This passage outlines a dialogue in which Marcus Coriolanus<sup>B</sup> insists that the gods are involved in all human activity. This involvement is said to hold in the case of wars, which are of urgent social importance and have uncertain results.

n. 3.1 **lines of EURIPIDES]** Euripides, *Hecuba*, lines 956–60. Euripides has the character Polymestor lament the destructive effects of the Trojan War. He ponders the transitory and uncertain nature of a life controlled by the whim of the gods. Polymestor maintains that the gods sow discord only to increase the reverence of mortals, who turn to the gods in times of flux and anguish. A literal translation of the passage Hume quotes is: ‘There is nothing in which one can have confidence, whether the continuance of a good reputation, or the freedom from future misfortune of those who are successful now. On the contrary, the gods confound things, disorienting us this way and that, so that in our ignorance we may worship them.’

42.29 **says a GREEK historian,<sup>4</sup>**] Footnote reference: Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library* 3.47.1. Diodorus recounts the story of an imperfect land in which exceptional happiness is experienced by the inhabitants, the Sabaeans (‘the most numerous of the tribes of the Arabians’, as reported at 3.46.1). Fortune combines harm with happiness and serves as a warning not to take the gods for granted. Hume cites Diodorus nine times in *NHR*, but see ‘Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations’, n. 115, where Hume warns of Diodorus’s weaknesses as a historian.

43.7 **STRABO,<sup>5</sup> . . . the GETES]** Footnote reference: Strabo, *Geography* 7.3.4. The Getes, or Getae, were a stable tribal people of advanced material culture who inhabited a region corresponding roughly to a segment of modern Romania and Bulgaria. They were called ‘Getae’ in Hellenic culture, but ‘Daci’ or ‘Dacians’ by the Romans. Strabo reports on the Getean celibacy and religious fanaticism: ‘[These] people regard as wretched a life without many women, and yet at the same time regard as pious and just a life that is wholly bereft of women. . . . The interpretation that the wifeless men of the Getae are in a special way reverential towards the gods is clearly contrary to reason.’ For further annotation on the Getes and Herodotus’s reports on them, see ann. 57.6 and n. 41 (on *NHR* 7.3 and n. 41).

#### SECTION 4: Deities not Considered as Creators or Formers of the World

44.7 **before the revival of letters]** Hume apparently thought that philosophy and learning made little progress before the revival of letters. See his comments on the period before and after the Renaissance, with references to specific figures, in *History of England* (appx. 2 [1: 487]; ch. 12 [2: 72]; ch. 29 [3: 140]; appx. 4 [5: 150]).

44.10 **interposition]** intervention or stepping in.

44.16 **appellation of atheism]** The terms ‘atheism’ and ‘atheist’ were commonly used in the eighteenth century to indicate not only those who do not believe in God, but those who believe in God in an unacceptably unorthodox manner. The term was therefore applied to those who fail to accept some critical theistic belief, such as divine providence or the afterlife.

44.20 **invisible intelligent power]** Cf. Hume's use of the term 'invisible intelligent principle' at *EHU* 7.21; see also the related discussions at *NHR* 2.2; 2.5; 3.4; 5.2; 8.2; 15.5. Appeals to invisible intelligent agents are of central importance in Hobbes's treatment of religion in *Leviathan* 6.36 and 12.

n. 6.1 **Père LE COMTE]** Footnote reference: Louis Daniel Le Comte, SJ, 'A Monseigneur le Cardinal de Bouillon. De la Religion ancienne & moderne des Chinois', in *Nouveaux mémoires sur l'état présent de la Chine* (see Cat.). Le Comte was among a group of Jesuits sympathetic to the Chinese. His favourable reports on Chinese culture, religion, and morality were translated into several European languages and widely read, but his writings were denounced by influential Christian theologians as impious and subversive of faith. In a discussion of idolatry, Le Comte notes that many idols are worshipped in China. He writes that 'If the people after worshipping them a great while do not obtain what they desire', they abandon the idols. He recounts a story of a person whose prayers were not answered and who retaliated by accusing the idol of deceitfulness, malice, and promise-breaking. After a formal trial, the idol was condemned, banished, and his temple destroyed. (See the translation, *Memoirs and Remarks... Made in Above Ten Years Travels through the Empire of China*, pp. 328–31.)

45.2 **LAPLANDERS... extraordinary shape.]** Footnote reference: Jean-François Regnard, *Voyage de Laponie (Journey to Lapland)*. Lapland is a region of Scandinavia above the Arctic Circle that ranges over Finland, Sweden, Norway, and the Kola Peninsula of Russia. The Laplanders, or Lapps, are ancient inhabitants. Traditionally nomadic, they were often relatively isolated from the activities of national governments. Regnard's *Journey*, based on a 1681 tour, reported on diverse gods worshipped in Lapland. He describes Laplanders as addicted to magic, superstition, and paganism, and gives the following description of the primary gods: 'These gods are made of a long stone, without any other shape than that which nature has given it, and such as they find it on the borders of the lakes. So, every stone made in a particular manner, rough, or full of holes and concavities, is with them a god; and the more extraordinary the stone is, the greater is their veneration for it' (ed. Pinkerton, 1: 178–9).

45.3 **EGYPTIAN mythologists... beasts.]** Footnote references: Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library* 1.86.1–3; Lucian, *On Sacrifices* 14; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 5, lines 321 ff.; Manilius, *Astronomica* 4, lines 579–82, 800–1. Diodorus gives an explanation of the 'astonishing' Egyptian practice of animal worship: Because the gods who came into existence in the beginning were far outnumbered by mortals, they took on the forms of certain animals to save themselves from 'the savagery and violence of mankind'. In Lucian's explanation, the gods fled to Egypt to hide from their enemies. In their terror, each fled into a different animal. Ovid offers essentially the same explanation as Lucian, but credits Typhoeus with pursuing the gods until they fled into Egypt, where they took refuge in the form of animals. Manilius adds a tale about Venus, who changed herself into a fish. For more on

Egyptian practices and beliefs, see ann. 61.12 (at *NHR* 9.2, on Egyptian idolaters) and ann. 67.5 (on *NHR* 12.1, regarding Herodotus, Cambyses, and Apis).

**45.6 The CAUNII . . . foreign deities.<sup>9</sup>**] Footnote reference: Herodotus, *History* 1.172. The Caunii or Caunians were the people ('nation' or tribe) of Caunus, in South Asia Minor (called by Hume 'Lesser ASIA'). Herodotus reports that the Caunii disdained worship in foreign temples that had been erected in their land, preferring to return to the worship of their traditional gods. With this motivation, they performed the acts Hume mentions; but his claim that the Caunii conducted their ritual 'regularly, at certain seasons' goes beyond a literal reading of Herodotus's statements.

**45.11 the SUEVI.<sup>10</sup>**] Footnote reference: Gaius Julius Caesar, *Gallic War* 4.7. (Hume refers in this note to the full title of Caesar's *Gallic War*—*Commentariorum de bello Gallico* or *De bello Gallico comentarii*—but uses a shortened form of the title in n. 36 below.) 'Suevi' or 'Suebi' refers to the largest and most warlike of the German tribes. The term was used by Tacitus in *Germania* for a large group of peoples (roughly all Eastern and Northern Germanic peoples). However, Caesar's use of 'Suevi' is the common classical usage. Hume's report incorporates a close paraphrase of Caesar.

**45.12 DIONE in HOMER to VENUS . . . on the gods.<sup>11</sup>**] Footnote reference: Homer, *Iliad* 5, lines 381–4. Dione does not straightforwardly report that the gods have inflicted many ills on humans, but she comforts Venus, wounded by Diomedes, by saying that many of the gods 'have suffered at the hands of men, in bringing grievous woes one upon the other'.

**45.15 gross representations . . . LONGINUS<sup>12</sup>**] Footnote reference: Anonymous (generally, but erroneously, attributed to Longinus<sup>B</sup>), *On the Sublime* 9.7. The author is writing about Homer's depiction of the battle of the gods. He criticizes Homer for having made the men gods in the *Iliad*, and the gods men. Unless taken allegorically, he asserts, these passages from Homer are 'utterly irreligious'.

**45.18 Some writers<sup>13</sup> . . . impieties of ARISTOPHANES**] Footnote references: Pierre Brumoy, *Le théâtre des Grecs*, 'Discours sur le parallèle du théâtre ancien & du moderne'; and Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle, *Histoire des oracles* 8. Aristophanes used a satiric style to attack persons, politics, and practices. He ridiculed the gods as dishonest and absurd, using the same irreverence with which he lampooned the political and professional figures of Athens. However, Aristophanes did not challenge the commonplace belief that the community should worship the gods.

Brumoy remarks that it is difficult to reconcile the laughter of Athenians at Aristophanes' ridicule with either their reverence for the gods or their condemnation of the religious views of Socrates. Brumoy suggests that we may find a partial solution by distinguishing between 'serious religion' and 'fabulous religion' as represented in theatre. Fontenelle cites Aristophanes, and comments on the enjoyment some people obtain from seeing their religion treated amusingly.

45.26 **JUPITER in the AMPHITRYON . . . calamity.**<sup>14]</sup> Footnote reference: Arnobius, *Against the Heathen* 7.33. The *Amphitryon* (or *Amphitryo*) is a Greek play, adapted by Roman comic dramatist Titus Maccius Plautus (third–second century BC), in which Jupiter attempts to seduce a mortal woman by assuming the appearance of her husband, the Greek hero Amphitryo. She is tricked, and upon Amphitryo's return from fighting a war, a violent quarrel erupts. (Jupiter's sexual exploits and deceits are further discussed in ann. 73.6, on *NHR* 12.18.) Arnobius's seven books *Against the Heathen* have been given various titles, the most common being *Adversus gentes*. This book raises such questions as whether Jupiter sets aside his resentment when Plautus's play is acted.

45.32 **LACEDEMONIANS . . . XENOPHON,**<sup>15]</sup> Footnote reference: Xenophon, 'Constitution of the Lacedaemonians', 13.2–5. Xenophon writes of the Lacedaemonians' practice of offering sacrifices and prayers in the early morning to 'pre-engage' the gods in their favour.

46.1 **SENECA,**<sup>16]</sup> . . . votaries in the temples] Footnote reference: Seneca, *Ad Lucilium epistulae morales* 41 ('On the God Within Us'). Seneca maintains that instead of relying on temples or prayer, we should look within ourselves for enlightenment: 'A holy spirit indwells within us' as our guardian. In saying 'We may gather from Seneca', Hume seems to be using Seneca's text to initiate his own ideas. Seneca does not discuss votaries (devoted followers and worshippers), beadles (minor parish officers), sextons (maintenance persons responsible for vessels, vestments, and the like), or a seat near the image of a deity. Seneca mentions only that 'We do not need . . . to beg the keeper of a temple to let us approach his idol's ear, as if in this way our prayers were more likely to be heard'.

46.4 **The TYRIANS, when besieged by ALEXANDER . . . enemy.**<sup>17]</sup> Footnote references: Quintus Curtius Rufus, *History of Alexander* 4.3.21–2; and Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library* 17.41.8. Tyrians are the inhabitants of Tyre, an ancient maritime city of Phoenicia. The Phoenicians worshipped Baal and Astarte as principal divinities. The city fell to Alexander the Great in 332 BC. Quintus Curtius reports that even when Alexander's fleet encircled Tyrian territory, the Tyrians did not lose heart. However, when a Tyrian citizen reported having had a vision of the revered Apollo deserting the city, the Tyrians bound the statue of Apollo with a chain of gold and attached the chain to the altar of Hercules, supposing that Hercules had the strength to hold Apollo back. Diodorus Siculus reports only that 'the Tyrians were so credulous that they tied the image of Apollo to its base with golden cords, preventing, as they thought, the god from leaving the city'.

46.6 **AUGUSTUS . . . forbade NEPTUNE . . . that expedient.**<sup>18]</sup> Footnote reference: Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars* 2, 'Augustus' 16. The pertinent part is 'Augustus' 16.1–2. Suetonius reports that Augustus twice lost his fleet by storms and then forbade Neptune to be carried in procession. One passage reads: 'Augustus has been taken to task for crying out, when he heard that his fleets were sunk: "I will

win this war, whatever Neptune may do!" and for removing the god's image from the sacred procession.'

**46.9 enraged at their gods...allegiance to them.**<sup>19]</sup> Footnote reference: Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars* 4, 'Gaius Caligula' 5. In Suetonius's account of stoning the gods in the temples, the stoning and overturning of altars illustrate the intense devotion of the supporters of Germanicus.<sup>B</sup> Hume's assertion that, on the death of Germanicus, the people were so enraged that they 'openly renounced all allegiance' to their gods requires interpretation of the central passage: 'Yet far greater and stronger tokens of regard were shown at the time of his death and immediately afterwards. On the day when he passed away the temples were stoned and the altars of the gods thrown down, while some flung their household gods into the street and cast out their newly born children' (*Lives of the Caesars*, 1: 408–9).

**46.14 canonical system of the heathens;**<sup>20]</sup> Footnote references: Herodotus, *History* 2.53; Lucian, *Zeus Catechized* 1, *On Funerals* 2, *Saturnalia* 5. Herodotus discusses how the Greeks learned when the gods came into being, and what outward shape they took. He and Lucian both credit Homer and Hesiod for these teachings.

**46.15 HESIOD...powers of nature.**<sup>21]</sup> Footnote reference: Hesiod, *Works and Days*, line 108. Hesiod recounts how the race of mortals came from the same source as various gods: namely from the gods who dwelt on Olympus. The translation of the passage cited by Hume is: '[I shall sketch] how gods and mortal men have come into being from the same source.'

**46.17 PANDORA...PROMETHEUS...celestial regions.**<sup>22]</sup> Footnote reference: Hesiod, *Theogony*, lines 570–2. Hesiod describes the creation by Zeus of the 'evil thing' Pandora. Pandora was created with the aid of the 'Limping God' (Hephaestus, or Vulcan) as a punishment for Prometheus's introduction of fire to mankind. Pandora is the only mythological example of a being divinely *created*, rather than generated by or evolved from existing beings.

**46.23 OVID...“Quisquis fuit ille Deorum?”<sup>23]</sup>...chaos]** Footnote reference: Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1, line 32. This quotation is a fragment from Ovid, meaning 'Whichever of the gods it was'. In context the expression is declarative (not interrogative, as it was published in all editions of *NHR* after the 1st). The full passage in the *Metamorphoses* reads as follows: 'When he, whichever of the gods it was, had thus arranged in order and resolved that chaotic mass, and reduced it, thus resolved, to cosmic parts, he first moulded the earth into the form of a mighty ball so that it might be of like form on every side.' The 'chaos' here mentioned was understood in the eighteenth century as the doctrine of ancient philosophers that the world was first formed out of a disorderly or irregular mass of elements.

**46.32 DIODORUS SICULUS,<sup>24</sup>...origin of the world]** Footnote reference: Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library* 1.6; 1.7.1–7. Diodorus appeals to natural physical causation to describe the earth's evolution. He reports that different chemical

elements separated to form the sea and land, and that combinations of heat and cold, as well as moisture and aridity, created living creatures, presumably including the human species. Evidence of divine causation or influence is not mentioned as a factor. Hume made a similar, but not identical, notation about Diodorus's report in his 'Early Memoranda' (§ 203).

**47.1 passage<sup>25</sup> . . . ICHTHYOPHAGI]** Footnote reference: Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library* 3.20.1–3. 'Ichthyophagi' derives from Greek for 'fish-eaters'. This term was applied by the ancients to various fish-eating peoples of Africa and Asia. Diodorus refers to 'one tribe of the Ichthyophagi'. His context suggests that the tribe is African, despite Hume's reference to a people of India. In n. 24, Hume cites bk. 1 in Diodorus and here in n. 25 writes 'ibid'; however, the proper reference to the Ichthyophagi is in bk. 3.

**47.4 physiologists]** students or practitioners of natural philosophy. Cudworth (*True Intellectual System of the Universe* 1.1.6–10, 13–16) uses this term (more narrowly) in contexts that are directly related to Hume's discussions of the ancients in *NHR*. Cudworth cites Democritus as a paradigm physiologist, but includes Leucippus and other ancient philosophers. He takes physiologists to be atomistic philosophers. See also the entry to 'theologers' at 47.13 below and Thomas Blount, *Glossographia: or a Dictionary Interpreting All Such Hard Words*, entries 'Physiology' and 'Physiologist'.

**47.8 specious]** plausible and seemingly allowable and just.

**47.12 zealous religionist<sup>26</sup>]** Footnote reference: Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library* 15.48.1–4; tr. Laurentius Rhodomanus (1604 edn.), p. 364 (see Cat., p. 267 below). While discussing severe earthquakes and tidal waves, Diodorus notes that natural scientists provide a causal explanation different from the explanations given by persons who 'venerate the divine power'. The latter say that these disasters are occasioned by the anger of the gods. Diodorus discusses these issues further in bk. 16, chs. 61–4.

**47.14 theologers]** A 'theologue' or 'theologer' is a divine or professor of divinity. See Blount, *Glossographia*, entry 'Theologer'. In an alternative use, 'theologer' refers to a figure in theology in pagan traditions—possibly even a mythical figure. Cudworth regarded the 'Pagan Theologers' as monotheists rather than polytheists (*True Intellectual System of the Universe*, preface and 1.4.16–17, 29, 32), but he also used the term 'theologer' in reference to mythical figures such as Orpheus. Anthony Collins concluded that 'allegory was in use' among the pagan 'theologers' (*Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion* 1.11, pp. 83–4).

**47.19 THALES, ANAXIMENES, HERACLITUS . . . passed unquestioned]** Some interpreters believe these three pre-Socratic philosophers held cosmogonies built on naturalistic explanations, though theories of the gods or divine forces were sometimes merged with these explanations. The scope of these philosophers'

commitments to Greek polytheism, theological explanation, and theism is disputed. Related observations about these three philosophers and about Anaxagoras<sup>B</sup> (see below) are in Toland, *Letters to Serena*, 2nd letter 3 (citing ancient sources different from those mentioned by Hume) and in passages in Cudworth mentioned in the annotations immediately below.

**47.20 ANAXAGORAS . . . first undoubted theist . . . accused of atheism.<sup>27]</sup>** Footnote reference: Plato, *Laws* 10. Anaxagoras was perhaps the first to hold that mind initiated the physical world, but his views were considered unorthodox, and he left Athens following a prosecution for impiety.<sup>28</sup> The charge stemmed from his teaching that the heavenly bodies are not gods and that the sun and the moon are material bodies. See Cudworth's lengthy argument to the conclusion that 'Anaxagoras stopt th[e] Atheistick Current' in the cosmologies of his predecessors; *True Intellectual System of the Universe* 1.3.20, 24, 28; 1.4.20. See, further, Bayle, *Dictionary*, 'Anaxagoras'.

Hume's reference to *Laws* 10 is possibly in error, though 886A–E is distantly relevant, and Cudworth cites *Laws* 10 to make a similar point. See the annotations immediately below for references to Plato that appear more pertinent, including *Laws* 12 (also cited by Cudworth), 967A–D, as well as Plato's *Apology* 26C–D, and *Phaedo* 97B–D.

**n. 27.1 THALES, ANAXIMANDER, and those early philosophers . . . really were atheists]** Anaximander was commonly interpreted as having used entirely naturalistic explanations. Roughly the set of philosophers Hume here depicts as atheists had been reported by Cudworth to be 'Hylopathian Atheists' in Aristotle's presentation of their views. However, Cudworth cites other authorities who interpret Thales as a theist. Cudworth concludes that there is good reason 'why Thales should be acquitted from this Accusation of Atheism', but he insists that Anaximander was a 'physiologer', 'the First Atheistical Philosopher', and the founder of the atheistic, materialistic philosophy mistakenly attributed by Aristotle and others to Thales: 'Anaxagoras . . . made Mind to be a Principle of the Universe. . . . Anaximander and the rest, supposed not Infinite Mind, but Infinite matter. . . . to have been the only Original of all things' (*True Intellectual System of the Universe* 1.3.19–21, 24). That Hume had read Cudworth on these philosophers and these issues is apparent from notations in his 'Early Memoranda' (§ 40) pertaining to 'four kinds of Atheists according to Cudworth'.

**n. 27.2 ANAXAGORAS and SOCRATES, . . . real theists . . . esteemed impious]** Hume gives an account similar to Cudworth's (see above passages) of both philosophers. By tradition, Anaxagoras had been, following the charge of impiety, protected by Pericles. Various accounts have been given of the outcome: Pericles may have helped Anaxagoras escape, but he also may have gone into voluntary exile. The life of Socrates is difficult to interpret on the matter of a commitment to theism, but his prosecution for impiety is not in doubt.

47.23 **SEXTUS EMPIRICUS<sup>28</sup> . . . EPICURUS . . . HESIOD]** Footnote reference: Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Physicists* 2.18–19 (alternatively, and commonly, cited as *Adversus mathematicos* 10.18–19; or *Adversus dogmaticos* 4.18–19). Hume cited *Adversus mathematicos*, bk. 9. By traditional standards, this book number is incorrect. However, Hume apparently relied on the edition of Sextus edited by P. and J. Chouët (see Cat.), the only edition that uses numbering consistent with Hume's citations of Sextus (see Julia Annas, 'Hume and Ancient Scepticism').

Sextus describes the education of Epicurus. Under tutorial guidance, Epicurus read Hesiod's *Theogony* and raised questions about how the world was created from chaos. The tutor replied that philosophers teach such matters, whereupon young Epicurus turned to the philosophers to satisfy his curiosity. The verses cited by Hume are from *Theogony*, lines 116–17.

48.4 **philology]** In the eighteenth century philology was understood as an assemblage of sciences consisting of grammar, rhetoric, poetry, and criticism—and possibly also antiquities, history, and literary studies.

48.9 **penetration]** intellectual access to the inner content of something.

48.17 **AGRIPPA . . . gods must submit.<sup>29</sup>]** Footnote reference: Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 6.54.2. Dionysius reports that the Roman senator, Menenius Agrippa,<sup>B</sup> made the statement before the senate as a recommendation: 'And when you consider also how great is the power of necessity, the one thing to which even the gods yield, be not vexed at your misfortunes nor allow yourselves to be filled with arrogance and folly'.

48.18 **Younger PLINY<sup>30</sup>]** Footnote reference: Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 6, letters 16, 20. In letters to Tacitus<sup>B</sup>, Pliny reports on the eruption of Vesuvius. Pliny had witnessed the death of his uncle and adoptive father, Pliny the Elder,<sup>B</sup> in the eruption, which occurred 24 Aug. 79 AD. The Elder Pliny had sailed to get a closer view of the eruption. The Younger Pliny describes his uncle's courage and asphyxiation on the shore. In the second letter, Pliny the Younger relates his own experiences. He reports that many observers of the eruption believed that no gods survived. The passage quoted by Hume, in which Pliny is introspecting, may be translated: 'I might have boasted that amidst dangers so appalling, not a sigh or expression of fear escaped from me, had not my support been founded in that miserable, though strong consolation, that all mankind were involved in the same calamity, and that I was perishing with the world itself' (*Letters*, letter 20, 1: 496–7).

48.26 **MARCUS AURELIUS, PLUTARCH . . . STOICS and ACADEMICS]** These schools either rejected or reinterpreted indigenous religious beliefs. Many Stoics believed in an impersonal divine providence, depicted the Roman gods as powers of nature, and viewed the popular legends as parables. In his *Meditations*, Marcus left traces of a theory with a vague commitment to a moral and benevolent power in the universe. He was perhaps revising accounts of impersonal nature in Stoic orthodoxy. Plutarch and various Academics defended philosophies of religion indebted to Plato and

Platonism, often with borrowings from other schools. Plutarch, who had studied at the Academy and had been a priest at Delphi, used symbolism and allegory to situate popular beliefs within a Platonic framework.

48.28 honourable appellation of *theism*] ‘Theism’ here presumably refers to the monotheistic doctrine of a supreme, active, providential God, by contrast to polytheism, pantheism, and deism. The latter have etymological roots in theism, but they were considered by many in the eighteenth century to lack some condition(s) essential to genuine theism. See, further, ann. 71.14 (on *NHR* 12.13, ‘imputation of deism’).

## SECTION 5: Various Forms of Polytheism: Allegory, Hero-Worship

49.23 allegories . . . other mythologists] Theagenes of Rhegium (6th century BC; Homeric critic) may have been the first scholar to interpret Homer’s representations allegorically (though no work by Theagenes survives). He allegorized the gods and interpreted their quarrels as symbolizing conflicts of natural and psychological powers. Of notable historical influence was Euhemerus of Messene (4th–3rd century BC; mythographer and novelist of travel). From him descends Euhemerism, the doctrine that gods are representations of men whose capacities were inflated in stories that were magnified over time. He maintained that these men were heroic warriors and heroes deified after their deaths and that all such myth rests on historical decay of fact. Reports and observations on Euhemerus’s theory are presented in Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library* 6.1 ff. Cudworth says that the ‘Atheistick’ doctrine of Euhemerism is ‘That all the Gods were really no other than Mortal Men’ (*True Intellectual System of the Universe* 1.4.32, p. 478).

Many writers before Hume had emphasized the importance of allegory, not merely in polytheistic traditions, but in the dominant monotheistic traditions. For example, Thomas Woolston (1670–1733; English free-thinker) maintained that the biblical documents are fully allegorical (*Six Discourses on the Miracles of our Saviour*), and Nicolas Fréret (1688–1749; French secretary of l’Académie des belles-lettres) propounded allegorical theories in various contexts of miracle and myth (*Oeuvres complètes*).

50.7 MARS . . . VENUS<sup>31</sup>] Footnote reference: Hesiod, *Theogony*, lines 933–5. This passage recounts the birth of the gods Panic and Fear, which, according to Hesiod, are the children of Ares (Mars) and Cytherea (a name for Venus).

50.8 Harmony . . . MARS<sup>32</sup>] Footnote references: Hesiod, *Theogony*, lines 936–7; Plutarch, *Lives*, ‘Pelopidas’ 19.2, 287f–288a. Hesiod attributes the parentage of Harmony to Ares (Mars) and Cytherea. Plutarch likewise presents Ares and Aphrodite (Venus) as the parents of Harmony.

50.10 **the Graces**<sup>33]</sup> Footnote reference: Homer, *Iliad* 14, lines 263–76. ‘Graces’ in ancient mythology were minor goddesses who were personifications of grace, beauty, gentleness, and friendship. Traditionally presented as the three daughters of Zeus and Eurynome (though this parentage is disputed), they usually bore the names Aglaia (called Charis by Homer in the *Iliad*), Thalia, and Euphrosyne. In the passage cited by Hume, Homer introduces another Grace named Pasithea. Hera, wife of Zeus and queen of Heaven, wanted to lull Zeus to sleep in order that the gods could help the Greeks. She sought to achieve this end by the aid of Hypnos ('Sleep', the brother of Thanatos, 'Death'), to whom she promised the Grace Pasithea in marriage.

50.14 **LUCRETIUS . . . appearance of allegory . . . popular religion**] The reference is to Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 1.1–43, where Venus is characterized as the guiding force behind the creation of everything joyous and lovely. Lucretius appeals to the goddess to instill in his poem some of her creativity and persuasive charm, and petitions Venus to end strife by working her charm on her mate, Mars. Lucretius does not discuss allegory and popular religion. *NHR* Sects. 13 and 14 have ‘popular religions’ in their titles. Hume also uses this term at *Dialogues* 1.17; 12.21, 23, 28. He is usually referring to prevailing indigenous religious traditions.

50.20 **as an EPICUREAN]** Epicurean theology was distanced from traditional Greek polytheism. Epicureans defended a deterministic causal chain in nature that excluded *particular providence*. (For the meaning of this expression, see ann. 52.22, on *NHR* 6.2, ‘*particular providence . . . general laws*’.) Humans were liberated in Epicurean theory from fears of harmful actions by the gods. See Epicurus, *Epicurus Reader*, texts 4.134; 16.43–56; 17.71–6; 18.103–10; Cicero, *De natura deorum* 1.7.17–1.8.18 ff.; 1.41.115–1.42.119; 2.17.45–7. The Stoics, in contrast, held that human affairs are governed providentially. See Lucian, *Zeus Rants* 3–4, 16–17, 36–51; and *Drinking Party, or Lapithae* 9, in which Zenothemis the Stoic ridicules the idea that an Epicurean could be a priest. The latter work is cited by Hume in *EHU*, n. 28, on a matter concerning the Epicureans and religion. Hume used Epicurus’s theological views as the setting of *EHU* 11, and once commented to Gilbert Elliot that ‘a profest Atheist’ and ‘an Epicurean’ are ‘little or nothing different’ (*Letters*, 1: 155).

51.1 **statuary of SYRIA . . . HELIOGABALUS . . . solar deity**<sup>34]</sup> Footnote reference: Herodian, *History* 5.3.3–5. A large, conic stone named Heliogabalus<sup>B</sup> was worshipped in the region of Syria as ‘the solar deity’. According to Herodian, ‘There was no actual man-made statue of the god, the sort Greeks and Romans put up; but there was an enormous stone, rounded at the base and coming to a point on the top, conical in shape and black. This stone is worshipped as though it were sent from heaven; on it there are some small projecting pieces and markings that are pointed out, which the people would like to believe are a rough picture of the sun.’

The Roman emperor Heliogabalus was descended from a family of the hereditary high priests of the sun-god Baal at Emesa, Syria. In Heliogabalus’s local region, Baal

was worshipped by the name Elah-Gabal, the root of 'Elagabalus' and 'Heliogabalus'. Hume briefly mentions Heliogabalus as emperor in 'Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations' 94 (and n. 114), citing Aelius Lampridius as the source of his information.

n. 34.1 **JUPITER AMMON is represented by CURTIUS]** Footnote reference: Quintus Curtius Rufus, *History of Alexander* 4.7.21–4. Quintus Curtius describes a shrine to Ammon found in the Ethiopian desert by Alexander's party. Three sets of walls enclose the shrine, making it a citadel for protection. In a 'grove of Ammon' a fountain known as the water of the sun flows, with its water growing progressively hotter throughout the day and night until it finally cools before daybreak, only to repeat the cycle again. The god has an image like that of a navel embedded in a mass of emeralds and other stones.

n. 34.2 **ARABIANS and PESSINUNTIANS... ARNOB.** lib. 6.] Footnote reference: Arnobius, *Against the Heathen* 6.11 (and also 3.15; 7.49–50). Arnobius depicts the worship of physical objects serving as idols. He discusses in bk. 6 the worship of unshapen stones and a flint worshipped by the people of Pessinus. In bk. 7 he questions the validity of attributing good fortune—e.g. military victory—to idols such as a rough, black stone.

**51.5 STILPO... MINERVA... workmanship of PHIDIAS, the sculptor.<sup>35]</sup>** Footnote reference: Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 2.11, 'Stilpo' 116. Diogenes tells this story about the philosopher Stilpo of Megara, who was discussing the work of the sculptor Phidias:

There is a story that [Stilpo] once used the following argument concerning the Athena of Phidias [Minerva being an Italian goddess regularly identified with Athena]: 'Is it not Athena the daughter of Zeus who is a goddess?' And when the other said 'Yes', he went on, 'But this at least is not by Zeus but by Phidias', and, this being granted, he concluded, 'This then is not a god'. For this he was summoned before the Areopagus; he did not deny the charge, but contended that the reasoning was correct, for that Athena was no god but a goddess; it was the male divinities who were gods. However, the story goes that the Areopagites ordered him to quit the city.

'MINERVA in the citadel' refers to Phidias's statue on the Acropolis. An Areopagite was a member of the council of the Areopagus, an aristocratic legislative and judicial council in Athens. The council met on a hill north-west of the Acropolis named Areopagus. Hume mentions the oratorical customs of the Areopagites in his essay 'Of Eloquence' 11.

**51.20 fabulous history and mythological tradition]** Many interpretations of fable and myth were published during the Enlightenment. Hume's views show some resemblance to theories that viewed myth and fable as the outgrowth of gullibility, superstition, curiosity, and imagination. Among those who ridiculed figures and stories in the ancient mythology, see Fontenelle, *De l'origine des fables*, pp. 13–17, 22–6, 33; and Bayle, *Dictionary*, articles 'Abel' (1: 22–4); 'Abraham'

(1: 44–6); ‘Achilles’ (1: 74–84); ‘Adam’ (1: 101–4); ‘Cham’ (2: 431–2); ‘Juno’ (3: 629–46); and ‘Jupiter’ (3: 646–54).

**51.27 all idolaters . . . not extremely different.<sup>36</sup>**] Footnote reference: Gaius Julius Caesar, *Gallic War* 6.17. Caesar describes particular characters and provinces that the Gallic people assigned to their deities. He says that, ‘Of these deities they have almost the same idea as all other nations’. See ann. 61.12 (on *NHR* 9.2) for additional discussion of Roman and Egyptian idolaters.

**51.30 travellers and conquerors . . . found their own deities every where]** In the source listed in n. 36, Caesar writes that the Gauls ‘most worship Mercury. . . . After him they set Apollo, Mars, Jupiter, and Minerva’ (*Gallic War* 6.17). As suggested in the previous annotation, Caesar thought the Gauls had almost the same conceptions as did other nations. For Hume’s somewhat different view of religion among ‘the ancient Gauls and Britons’, see his comments on their superstitions and idolatry in *History of England* (ch. 1 [1: 6]).

**51.33 HERTHA . . . TACITUS,<sup>37</sup> . . . *Mater Tellus*]** Footnote reference: Tacitus, *Germania* 40. Tacitus gives a vivid portrayal of the northern deity Nerthus (another manuscript reading for Hertha) as mother earth (*Mater Tellus*): ‘Then come the Reudigni and the Aviones, and the Anglii, and the Varini, the Eudoses and Suarines and Nuitones. These tribes are protected by forests and rivers, nor is there anything noteworthy about them individually, except that they worship in common Nerthus, or Mother Earth, and conceive her as intervening in human affairs, and riding in procession through the cities of men.’

Nerthus, or Hertha, is a nature-goddess or earth-goddess of the ancient Germans, whose name is similar to the Scandinavian ‘Njörd’, a Norse god of fertility, wealth, prosperity, and the sea. Though separated by forests and rivers, these tribes retained in common the worship of Hertha. Tacitus does not explicitly associate the ‘goddess Hertha of our Saxon ancestors’ with ‘the *Mater Tellus* of the Romans’.

## SECTION 6: Origin of Theism from Polytheism

**52.22 particular providence . . . general laws]** The subject of a particular providence is treated by Hume in *EHU* 11, ‘Of a Particular Providence and of a Future State’. A *particular* providence is to be contrasted to a *general* providence. Particular providence is God’s oversight of, and potential intervention in, the affairs of individuals; general providence is God’s provision through the fixed general laws of nature. For a delineation of the distinction, see Richard Price (1723–91; British Nonconformist minister and philosopher), *Four Dissertations*, p. 7. Malebranche also assumes the distinction (using the language of ‘general will’ and ‘particular will’) in *Treatise on Nature and Grace* 1.43, 56–7; 2.3, 45; and illustration.

The term ‘theist’ was often used in the eighteenth century to refer to those who believe in a particular providence, by contrast to ‘deists’, who denied divine

providential control of human affairs and emphasized fixed general laws. See ann. 44.16 (on *NHR* 4.1) regarding 'the appellation of *atheism*' and the editor's Introduction (pp. cxxii–cxxvi) on William Warburton's review of *NHR*. See also *NHR* 2.3 on 'particular providence'.

**52.33 Lord BACON... atheists]** In 'Of Atheism' Bacon writes: 'Certainly, a little *Philosophie* inclineth mans minde to *Atheisme*, but depth in *Philosophy*, bringeth men about to Religion' (*Essays*, Essay 16 [6: 413]). In *Advancement of Learning* 1.1.3, Bacon says 'That a litle or superficiall tast [later translation: knowledge] of *Philosophy*, may perchance incline the Mind of Man to *Atheisme*, but a full draught [later translation: further proceeding] thereof brings the mind back againe to Religion'. Hume also mentions Bacon's views on this subject at *Dialogues* 1.18. In his *History of England*, Hume offers an assessment of Bacon's intellectual abilities and contribution (ch. 48 and Appendix to the Reign of James I [5: 86, 153]).

**53.11 Madness, fury, rage, and an enflamed imagination... immediate communication with the Deity]** This theme is reminiscent of the treatment of religion, superstition, and enthusiasm in Trenchard's *Natural History of Superstition*, pp. 46–8. Trenchard mentions madness and rage, in particular, as conditions of 'Enthusiasm, by which word is meant a strong and impetuous Motion, or extraordinary and transcendent Ardor, Fervency or Pregnancy of the Soul, Spirits or Brain, which is vulgarly thought to be Supernatural... [making Mankind] prone to believe some special Presence of God'.

**53.20 idolatrous nation]** 'Idolatrous' is here extensionally equivalent to 'polytheistic'. However, see ann. 34.2 (on *NHR* 1.1) on 'polytheism or idolatry'.

**54.22 St. NICHOLAS... Muscovites]** St Nicholas was the patron saint of Russia. Devout Russians invoked him frequently, and kept icons of him in their homes. They believed that he protected against evils such as sickness, famine, and dangers at sea. See also ann. 82.20 (on *NHR* 14.5—the four Lents of the Muscovites).

The term 'Muscovite' commonly referred to a native or inhabitant of Muscovy, or Moscow, but Hume here seems to use the term to refer to Russian Eastern Orthodox believers. Warrant for this usage is found in William Turner, *The History of All Religions in the World* (1695), pp. 210, 225; and James Debia (vicar of Walberton), *An Account of the Religion, Rites, Ceremonies, and Superstitions of the Moscovites* (1710), a work on the Russian Eastern Orthodox Church.

**54.24 to carry off EUROPA... OPTIMUS MAXIMUS of the heathens]** Jupiter was once enamoured of Europa, said by mythologists to be the daughter of Agenor, king of Phoenicia. In order to avoid the jealous wrath of his wife Juno, Jupiter concealed himself as a snow-white bull with gem-like horns and a striking black streak. Europa became fascinated with his beauty, and even in this unlikely form he was able to cast a spell over her. She played with the bull and then mounted his back, at which point he sped away and swam the sea to Crete. He later revealed himself as Jupiter,

and she bore him three sons. This story had been disseminated in popular form in the 1694 work *Rape of Europa by Jupiter* (ed. Motteux and Eccles).

Jupiter was the son of Saturn and was identified with the Greek god Zeus, said to be the third son of Rhea and Cronus. In conspiracy with Hades and Poseidon, Zeus struck Cronus with a thunderbolt. According to Homer (in passages cited by Hume at *NHR* 6.11, on Homer and Hesiod), Zeus dispatched Cronus to live beneath the earth and sea (*Iliad*, lines 203–4).

As lord of heaven, Jupiter acquired the cult title Jupiter Optimus Maximus (the best and greatest). He was thus ranked above the other deities and above all Jupiters in other temples. Once enthroned in his temple in Rome as Optimus Maximus, Jupiter became central to Roman political life and patriotism, as its special protector.

**54.28 JACOBINS . . . CORDELIERS]** Jacobins were Dominican friars in France (or, more broadly, friars and sisters of the order of St Dominic). The term ‘Les Jacobins’ was originally applied to the French members of the order who came (as early as 1218) from the Church of St Jacques. Cordeliers were Franciscan friars in France. The name derives from the *cordelière*, the Franciscans’ knotted-cord rope-girdle, worn around the waist.

**54.32 BOULAINVILLIERS,<sup>38</sup> . . . CHRIST was interred]** Footnote reference: Henri, Comte de Boulainvilliers, *Abrégé chronologique de l'histoire de France*, in *Etat de la France* (1728 edn. [3: 499]). Boulainvilliers reported on a period of conflict between the Jacobins and Cordeliers: The Franciscans were defenders of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and the Dominicans were opponents. A conflict requiring papal intervention broke out during the period between the Council of Basel (1438) and the accession of Pope Sixtus IV (1471). Sixtus IV did not require the faithful to believe the dogma, but did require that there be no prejudice against those who believed either way. Further controversy led to further papal pronouncements, which increasingly favoured the dogma.

According to Boulainvilliers, a Cordelier preached against the hypostatic union (see the following annotation) at Bresse, Italy. This Cordelier maintained that when the blood of Jesus Christ was spilled at his passion, the hypostatic union was lost, and for a three-day period Jesus was neither divine nor the object of worship. This opinion was condemned as heresy by the Jacobins, leading to a controversy resolved by Pope Pius II. Boulainvilliers reports that even if the Cordeliers were rebuffed on this occasion, they gained revenge in disputes about the Immaculate Conception, which became a firm doctrine of the faith.

For Hume’s early interests in Boulainvilliers’s *Etat de la France*, see his ‘Early Memoranda’ (§§7–8, 11).

**54.33 hypostatic union . . . human nature]** In Christian theology the word ‘hypostatic’ has been used to refer to the substance or personhood of the divine. ‘Hypostasis’ means ‘what stands under’, hence ‘substance’ or ‘subsistence’. The hypostatic union refers to either (1) the union of divine and human natures in

the person of Christ, or (2) the consubstantial union of the three 'hypostases' or persons forming the Trinity. The three 'hypostases' of the Godhead are identical in substance; there is one nature or essence of God, but three hypostases, or persons. The doctrine of the hypostasis of Christ was developed by theologians to reconcile conflicting beliefs in separate, fully realized human and divine natures united inseparably in one person. Use of the Greek term 'hypostasis' and the Latin 'persona' provoked theological controversy, eventuating in various declarations of heresy; see ann. 66.18 ff. (on *NHR* 11.4).

**55.3 HOMER . . . OCEANUS and TETHYS]** The reference is to Homer's *Iliad* 14, lines 200–4 and 301–4; see also *Iliad* 15, lines 12, 47, on Jupiter as 'the sire of gods and men'. (Hume Romanizes Homer's references to Zeus.) Oceanus and Tethys are parents from whom, in ancient mythology, the river-gods and Oceanids were sprung. Homer reports, through a 'lying tale' told by Juno, that it is Oceanus 'from whom all we gods proceed'. On the description of Jupiter as an upstart parricide and usurper, see ann. 54.24, on *NHR* 6.8. Hume's depiction of Jupiter (and others) as absurd and immoral figures resembles certain representations in Bayle. For examples, see the list of articles in ann. 51.19, on *NHR* 5.9 (fabulous history and mythological tradition).

**55.9 A like contradiction is observable in HESIOD]** The reference is to Hesiod's *Theogony*, lines 47–52, 73, and 176 ff. Hesiod mentions a song the goddesses sing, in which Zeus appears as the father of gods and men. Zeus is depicted as the 'most excellent' god.

**55.12 MAHOMETANISM of this inconsistence]** Of this passage, religious controversialist William Warburton commented: 'We see what the man [Hume] would be at; through all his disguises . . . an insinuation against the Jewish and Christian Religions' (*Remarks*, Remark 11). Whatever the merits of this interpretation, some traditional interpretations of Islamic monotheism do provide instances of the problem mentioned by Hume. The theological goal of not compromising God's omnipotence (prompted in part by Manichaeism) rests on firm Koranic premisses. These premisses led prominent Islamic interpreters to make God the creator of all evil as well as all good (and of all human actions as well as other events in nature). At the same time, the 'sublime colours' of God's infinite attributes (see the annotation immediately below) are joined with depictions of active qualities of divine will and speech, divine acts of punishment, and acts such as sitting on the throne and agreeing to a covenant. The eschatology of the faith also includes an account of the final judgement, in which the souls of unbelievers will stand trial and may be condemned to eternal punishment in hell—even if the underlying theology holds that reward and punishment are themselves predestined. However, not all Muslim theologians have accepted these interpretations; some have held, for example, that willing evil is evil and that an essential attribute of God is not to will evil. See Majid Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam* 1–2, for a range of Islamic views.

55.13 **Deity in the most sublime colours]** Two nineteenth-century editors of Hume, T. H. Green and T. H. Grose, reported that 1756 proof-sheets of *NHR*, now lost, showed variant wording in this passage. An explanation of the changes Hume evidently made in the text is found in the editor's Introduction to this volume (pp. xxiv–xxvii). The representations of the deity discussed by Hume are found in Genesis 3 and 32 and Exodus 33. God is depicted in the Bible as speaking from the mouth, as having a countenance, as passing over the houses of the Israelites, etc.

### SECTION 7: Confirmation of this Doctrine

56.15 **the MAGIANS]** A Magian (pl. Magi) is a member of a hereditary priestly class of Median origin (near western Iran) in the ancient Persian religion. Lucian somewhat misleadingly speaks of the Magi as 'the disciples and successors of Zoroaster' (*Menippus, or the Descent into Hades* 6). Some Magi resident in Persia merged their beliefs with the theology of Zoroastrianism, but other Magians had independent roots. See ann. 61.29 (on *NHR* 9.4, on the disciples of Zoroaster and the Magians).

56.17 **sun as his image]** An account of *the sun as God's image in the visible universe* appears in several passages in the book by Thomas Hyde (see ann. n. 39). This elaborate work contains the *Sadder* (or *Saddar* or *Sad Dar*), a holy text of the Zoroastrian religion that delineates a variety of religious duties, practices, penalties, rituals, and the like (translated in Hyde's edition into Latin, from the original Pahlavi). Although God cannot be represented by any human-created image, the Magians consider 'Water and Fire in their protected purity, to be the only Images of God on earth' (Hyde, *Historia religionis*, p. 139). Fire is almost always mentioned when the sun is mentioned in Hyde, and he seems to interpret the sun, as well as fire and water in their pure form, as visible images of God. Hyde distinguishes between the sun as image of God and the sun as God. He believes that there have been errors of interpretation by authorities who report that the Persians believe the sun is God (p. 138). Hyde also includes more esoteric references to the sun (and fire) as an image in the visible universe.

56.21 **bare foot upon the ground]** Regarding the admonition *never to set bare feet on ground*, the *Sadder* prescribes as follows: 'It is a precept for the religious man that he not place his bare foot upon the ground: because a bare foot on the ground is evil. . . . Therefore you must not place your bare foot on the ground, lest your body be carried down to Hell' (*Sadder*, porta 48, in Hyde, p. 461). Rules for women are also prescribed (with reference, in particular, to *pregnant* women): 'They must not look into the sky, nor walk upon the ground on bare foot' (*Sadder*, porta 75, in Hyde, p. 474; italics added).

56.21 **spit into a fire]** Regarding the prescription *not to spit in fire*, 'It is good to care well for fire because as it struggles not to die out, it is to you almost a soul. That

*you would neither burn up soil or filth nor leave alone any such thing (fire) in fields within three miles; and by caring faithfully for fire in home, you should not leave thorns or trash in it' (*Sadder*, porta XI, lines 1 ff., in Hyde, p. 442; italics added). The word 'spit', as used by Hume, may be his translation of the word 'spurcum', which is similar to the more direct word for spit, 'sputum'. 'Spurcum' is generally defined as that which is 'nasty, dirty, foul, or unclean', but can be read as 'saliva' or 'spit'.*

56.21 **throw any water]** With regard to the admonition *not to throw water on fire*, the *Sadder* advises as follows: 'It is a precept, that when anything is cooked by a pot, only two [pots] must fill a third [pot] with water, so that if it will come to a boiling point, the water will not be poured into the Fire when it becomes hot. *For if you were not cautious in that part, so that water would not overflow into the Fire, the greatest sin will be on you, that you will receive torment until the day of reckoning*' (*Sadder*, porta 52, in Hyde, p. 463; italics added). In his 'Early Memoranda' (§187) Hume cited what appears to be this same passage in Hyde and the *Sadder*.

n. 39.1 **HYDE]** Footnote reference: Thomas Hyde, *Historia religionis veterum Persarum, eorumque Magorum*. Hyde's *Historia religionis*, also cited in n. 46, is apparently Hume's source for his several descriptions of Zoroastrian belief. Hume is apparently referring to Hyde's account as well as to the beliefs and prescriptions found in the *Sadder*. On the *Sadder*, see ann. 81.8 (on *NHR* 14.1). Hume cites a number of passages in Hyde, including principles in the *Sadder*, in his 'Early Memoranda' (§§184–92).

56.27 **bit of skin, about half the breadth of a farthing]** This reference to male circumcision could involve one of two bases of comparison. In the eighteenth century the term 'farthing' was commonly used to refer to the coin representing the value of one-fourth of a Saxon penny (until the seventeenth century a silver coin, subsequently made of copper or bronze). Occasionally, the term was used to refer to an ancient coin (farthing of gold), and the term could also mean simply a bit or an atom.

56.28 **two bits of cloth,<sup>40</sup>]** As indicated in n. 40, the reference is to 'the Scapulaire'. A scapular or *scapulaire* (French) was originally a cloak forming part of a religious habit adopted (no later than the eleventh century) by certain Roman Catholic religious orders and worn as a badge of affiliation. This material has a hole in the middle so that the head can pass through while the cloth hangs from the shoulders. The front and back portions were often arranged to present the form of a cross. A symbolic meaning thus became attached to the garment. It was viewed as a cross that one bears upon one's shoulders, reminiscent of the yoke of Christ (see Luke 9: 23). The friar was commanded to follow Christ by taking up this yoke and living in austerity and devotion.

'Small scapulars' began to be worn in the sixteenth century. These pieces of cloth were worn either as a single piece around the neck or as two pieces, one worn on the chest and the other on the back, joined by strings. The scapular commonly had an embroidered picture of the Virgin Mary or of a saint in whose honour it was

worn. The purpose was to keep before the wearer's mind the ideals and traditions of the religious order. Some friars claimed that those who faithfully wore the scapular would not go to hell. This belief was controversial even among Roman Catholics, and highly controversial if not accompanied by a theory that made the believer's intention and will a relevant factor in salvation. Eventually the scapular was worn only as a fallible sign of one's interior commitment, which alone was believed to count as a condition of salvation.

**57.6 ZAMOLXIS . . . GETES.<sup>41]</sup>** Footnote reference: Herodotus, *History* 4.93–4. Hume made a related observation about the Getae in his 'Early Memoranda' (§255). The Getae (see ann. 43.7 on *NHR* 3.6, on Strabo and the Getes) believed only in Zamolxis (also spelled Zalmoxis). Their doctrine of immortality affirmed that one who died went to Zamolxis. Thunder and lightning were regarded as threats from a rival god, and were answered by arrows shot into the sky.

Herodotus reports that Zamolxis may have been a man who lived before or during the time of Pythagoras and may have orchestrated a cult following. Herodotus recounts that the Getae were the bravest and most law-abiding of all Thracians. However, in 'Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations' 165, Hume describes Thracians as living 'by pasturage and plunder', with the Getes being 'still more uncivilized'. Hume there cites Ovid and Strabo as his sources of information. An observation about the Getes, Zamolxis, and immortality is found in Toland, *Letters to Serena* (2nd letter, pp. 42–3, also citing Herodotus and Strabo): 'The Getes learnt the Immortality of the Soul from their Countryman Zamolxis.'

## SECTION 8: Flux and Reflux of Polytheism and Theism

**58.0 Flux and Reflux]** Beyond the meaning of the flowing and ebbing of the sea, this expression was used figuratively in various literatures. Examples include the flux and reflux of fortune, of nations, and of fears and hopes. See *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'flux', for distinctive uses of this expression in writers including Harvey, Shaftesbury, and De Foe.

**58.14 emergence]** an unexpected or sudden occurrence or development.

**58.22 the origin of idolatry or polytheism]** The title of the third of Toland's *Letters to Serena* is 'The Origin of Idolatry, and Reasons of Heathenism'. The enquiry in this letter shows some similarity to Hume's treatment of the subject (see esp. pp. 78, 129).

**59.10 JEWS and MAHOMETANS . . . banishing all the arts of statuary and painting]** Jews traditionally distinguish between the worship of strange gods (idols) and the use of images (icons). Both are condemned. The early history of Judaism was marked by struggles of biblical prophets to bring idolatrous cults in line with the second commandment: 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth

beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them' (Exod. 20: 4–5). Idolatry was present in the indigenous culture and enjoyed the allegiance of the reigning monarchs. The most popular cults were of Canaanite origin, and included those of Baal, Asherah, and Ashtaroth. Illegitimate iconolatry, of which the most famous is worship of the golden calf, was common and harshly criticized by the prophets.

During the advent of Islam, idolatrous beliefs pervaded the world of nomadic Arabs. The followers of Muhammad regarded idols, imagery, and symbols as distracting the mind from the true God, and as inconsistent with divine revelation. They condemned the stubborn pride found in those who adhered to traditional polytheism. The doctrinal basis for banning idolatry was that monotheism is the truth revealed by God. Muhammad declared that those who worship other gods are rebels who will be cast into hell. In the *Koran*, historical connections are established between the Jewish tradition, in figures such as Moses and Abraham, and Islamic commands to shun 'the filth of idols' (Mohammad, *Speeches & Table-Talk*, pp. 60, 62, 111; *Koran*, in *The Glorious Koran*, pp. 215, 436).

## SECTION 9: Comparison of these Religions with regard to Persecution and Toleration

**60.4 knavery to impose on credulity]** At *EPM* 9.22 Hume discusses the 'sensible knave', who occasionally acts unjustly while concealing his immoral acts through deception. Hume also discusses knavery in his essay 'Of the Independency of Parliament' 1–2.

**60.4 humanity]** At *EPM* 5.46 Hume speaks of 'any such principle *in our nature* as humanity or a concern for others' (italics added). He also refers to the character trait of humanity as a virtue of concern and attention to others. 'Humanity' was a pivotal concept in moral treatises when Hume wrote and was sometimes associated with a capacity for sympathy and with fellow-feeling (see *EPM* 5.17, 20).

**n. 42.1 VERRIUS FLACCUS . . . PLINY . . . MACROBIUS . . . SAMMONICUS SERENUS]** Footnote references: Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 28.4 (ch. 2 in older editions), §§18–19; Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 3.9.6–13. Verrius Flaccus was a freedman who became a distinguished writer. Hume's statement of Pliny's recounting appears to be a close paraphrase. Macrobius reports that bk. 5 of Sammonicus Serenus,<sup>B</sup> *Secret World (Res reconditæ)*, supplies 'the two formulas' that (1) call forth the gods from a city and (2) commit the city to destruction or annihilation. Macrobius quotes both formulae.

**60.24 sects fall naturally into animosity . . . zeal . . . passions]** In his *History of England*, Hume offers many instances of animosity and zeal, especially with respect to differences within Roman Catholicism and within Protestantism. In one passage, he notes, in addition, that Catholics regarded Protestant sectarian

disagreements as vindicating their own Catholic beliefs about the church universal: 'Differences among the protestants were matter of triumph to the catholics; who insisted, that the moment men departed from the authority of the church, they lost all criterion of truth and falsehood in matters of religion, and must be carried away by every wind of doctrine' (ch. 35 [3: 385]). In another passage Hume is unsparing in his appraisal of the history of the denomination in which he had been raised: 'The Scots . . . had a near prospect of spreading the presbyterian discipline in England and Ireland. . . . Never did refined Athens so exult in diffusing the sciences and liberal arts over a savage world; never did generous Rome so please herself in the view of law and order established by her victorious arms; as the Scots now rejoiced, in communicating their barbarous zeal and theological fervour, to the neighbouring nations' (ch. 55 [5: 332–3]). Further examples are found in chs. 45, 47, 51–2, 57.

**61.7 replied the oracle.<sup>43]</sup>** Footnote reference: Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.3.1. The Delphic oracle became the leading shrine of Apollo. Oracular utterings were delivered by a young priestess in an ecstatic trance. A priest then mediated to a questioner what would otherwise be incoherent messages from the priestess. Though an oracle is a divine utterance made through a medium, 'consulting an oracle' could mean that one had consulted a god, a priest or priestess, or the shrine. Xenophon reports that the question 'What is my duty of sacrifice?' elicited the following response from the priestess of Delphi: 'Follow the custom of the State: That is the way to act piously.' Xenophon suggests that Socrates accepted this prescription and counselled others to do the same. A similar report is found at *Memorabilia* 4.3.16.

**61.8 The ROMANS commonly adopted the gods]** The religion of early Rome absorbed the poetry, ritual, and pantheon (deities) of the Greeks. The Romans also embraced religions of the Orient, such as Adonis of Syria, Isis and Osiris of Egypt (see n. 44), and Mithras of Persia. Elements of these religions were exported to Rome and incorporated into the practices and beliefs of a state religion controlled by secular officials. (Educated classes in Rome often preferred profane philosophical systems such as Stoicism and Epicureanism.)

**61.11 wars and persecutions of the EGYPTIAN idolaters . . . different sects]** The Romans did not consistently accommodate Egyptian theological beliefs. Several times between 58 and 48 BC the Romans destroyed Egyptian chapels and attempted to suppress the Egyptian cults. However, Egyptian gods were popular in the Roman Empire.

In early Egyptian idolatry, gods were presented either as animals, humans, inanimate objects, or (less commonly) plants. Although Greek and Christian interpreters attributed to Egyptians the belief that the animals are the gods, these images were widely regarded in Egypt as visible representations of divine spirits with whom the community wished to make contact. Each community had its own deity, often represented as an animal figure. For example, the city of Thebes worshipped Amon, depicted as a ram. Memphis had two protectors: Sekhmet, presented as a lioness, and Apis (or Hapis), depicted as a bull. Other adopted

animals included the cobra, frog, baboon, mongoose, vulture, hippopotamus, cow, eel, and mouse. These figures were given human qualities and were often depicted as composite human-animals.

**61.15 worshippers of dogs... adorers of cats or wolves.<sup>44]</sup>** Footnote reference: Plutarch, *Moralia*, 'Isis and Osiris' 72, 379E–380C. Plutarch examines hypotheses that explain ancient Egyptian religious practices of animal worship. He notes that people were drawn into wars in order to protect their particular animal(s). Dogs, cats, and wolves are precisely the animals selected as examples by Trenchard, *Natural History of Superstition*, 15.

**61.17 EGYPTIAN superstition... HERODOTUS.<sup>45]</sup>** Footnote reference: Herodotus, *History* 2.180. Herodotus reports that the Delphians received a large donation from Amasis II<sup>B</sup> toward finishing the temple and also received a sum from Greeks living in Egypt. This pharaoh erected temples at Memphis and Sais and established alliances with the Greeks.

**61.23 MAHOMETANISM... bloody principles**] Hume is perhaps referring to the standard European view that Islam is a bloody, ruthless, vengeful, tyrannical, and intolerant religion—lacking in divine authority and viewing the sword as the route to heaven. Hume points to similar views at *EHU* 10.24 and 'Of the Standard of Taste' 4. He also explains the historical background of the Christian opinion of Islam in *History of England*. There the 'Turcomans or Turks' are characterized as having been particularly fierce and barbaric (ch. 5 [1: 235]). However, Hume also speaks of the Protestant–Catholic conflict in Britain as involving 'schemes the most bloody... that had ever been thought of in any age or nation' and of the 'bloody designs [that]... appeared every where' (chs. 39, 41 [4: 75, 211]). His vivid descriptions leave little doubt that he regarded much of British history as exhibiting bloody designs on the part of royalty, political leaders, religious officials, etc.

For a sample of the many writings available to Hume that reflect an estimate of Islam as a religion of bloody principles, see Isaac Barrow (1630–77; English mathematician and theologian), *Works*, sermon 14, 'Of the Impiety and Imposture of Paganism and Mahometanism' (2: 154–6); Humphrey Prideaux (1648–1724; lecturer at Christ Church, Oxford, and dean at Norwich), *True Nature of Imposture Fully Display'd in the Life of Mahomet*, esp. pp. viii–ix, 13, 26–7, 105, 199, 218; John Jackson (1686–1763; English religious writer and clergyman), *An Address to Deists*, pp. 80–5; Charles Wolsey (1630?–1714; British politician and theological writer), *The Reasonableness of Scripture-Belief*, pp. 167–71; Grotius, *Truth of the Christian Religion* 6.2, 5–8; Paul Rycaut, *Present State of the Ottoman Empire* 2.2 (pp. 102–3); Thomas Hyde, 'Historical and Critical Reflections upon Mahometanism and Socinianism'; Bayle, *Dictionary*, 'Mahomet' [K–P]; and Blaise Pascal (1623–62; French mathematician, philosopher, and theologian), *Pensées* 241–2 (Levi nos.).

Also influential was the translation and commentary of George Sale (1697?–1736; English lawyer and Arabic scholar), *Koran, Commonly called The Alcoran of Mohammed*; see his 'Preliminary Discourse', 49–50, 142–4. Hume's friend Edward

Gibbon (1737–94; British historian) offered a generally negative portrayal of Islam in ch. 50 of *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (a post-NHR work). This chapter was later issued as an independent book entitled *Life of Mahomet*; see esp. pp. 48–51, 75, 122, 150.

**61.25 fire and faggot]** Both Catholics and Protestants used this expression to refer to acts of burning heretics alive. Protestants commonly used it to rebuke Catholics (e.g. with reference to the Inquisition), as is evident in the following condemnation of Catholics by Matthew Pool(e) (1624–79; Protestant biblical commentator): ‘your Religion . . . is written in blood. I perceive you answer our Arguments with Fire and Faggot’ (*A Dialogue Between A Popish Priest, and An English Protestant*, 114). Humphrey Prideaux went so far as to say that the ‘Romanists’ had learned to use ‘Sword, Fire and Faggot’ from ‘the method which Mahomet took to establish’ his religion (*True Nature of Imposture Fully Display'd*, p. 218).

In his *History of England* Hume several times uses the language of ‘faggots’. He tells the following stories about English executions of Dutchmen (among other stories he tells involving faggots): ‘four Dutch anabaptists, three men and a woman, had faggots tied to their backs at Paul’s Cross, and were burned in that manner. . . . [A] Dutchman, called Van Paris, accused of the heresy, which has received the name of Arianism, was condemned to the [flames]. . . . He suffered with so much satisfaction, that he hugged and caressed the faggots, that were consuming him; a species of frenzy, of which there is more than one instance among the martyrs of that age’ (chs. 32, 34 [3: 264, 367]; see also ch. 31 [3: 216]).

The word ‘faggot’ (or ‘fagot’) meant, at the time Hume wrote, any of the following: (1) sticks or branches, as those used for fuel; (2) the punishment of burning alive; and (3) a badge worn on the sleeve of upper garments by persons who had recanted heretical views. ‘To faggot’ meant, among other things, to bind a person hand and foot.

**61.29 disciples of ZOROASTER]** Zoroastrianism arose in ancient Persia as a monotheistic religion centring on *Ahura Mazdah*, ‘the Wise Lord’. The century and location of its origins are unknown, but Zoroaster (or Zarathustra) may have lived before 1000 BC. After his death, the religion spread westward in Iran; see ann. 56.15 ff., on NHR 7.2.

**61.29 shut the doors . . . MAGIANS.<sup>46</sup>**] Footnote reference: Thomas Hyde, *Historia religionis veterum Persarum, eorumque Magorum*. The classical Greek understanding of Zoroastrianism was largely limited to the depiction provided by the Magians. Hume seems to be following this conception, under guidance from Hyde’s *Historia religionis*. A reference to *shutting the doors of heaven* is found in a passage in Hyde that discusses how the Persians diligently conceal their religion, because, ‘by the religious precept of Zoroaster in the book *Sadder*’, it is prohibited to teach and write to the outside (ch. 1, lines 9–15 (p. 5)). The *Sadder*, or 100 portae—‘doors’ in Latin—was not for public display; the doors were closed to anyone foreign to the

religion. For more information on the Magians, Zoroaster, Hyde, and the *Sadder*, see anns. 56.15 ff. (on *NHR* 7.2); and 81.8 (on *NHR* 14.1, on the *Sadder*). (Caution is in order regarding Hyde's interpretations and his dating of the *Sadder*. Though a distinguished orientalist and scholar of Zoroastrianism, Hyde was a steadfast Christian who sometimes ridiculed other religious traditions.)

**61.30 PERSIAN conquests . . . temples and images of the GREEKS]** Herodotus (*History* 8.33–5, 51–4) relates stories of Persian plundering and burning of Greek temples to which Hume may be alluding. It appears that the temple burnings were part of a larger campaign of carnage, destruction, and plundering. It is historically unclear whether Persian zeal was directed specifically against temples and images and whether the Persian conquests were obstructed by these or other anti-religious actions.

**61.33 ALEXANDER . . . abolished.<sup>47</sup> . . . the BABYLONISH rites and ceremonies.<sup>48]</sup>** Footnote references: (n. 47) Arrian, *Anabasis* 3.16.4–5; 7.17.2; (n. 48) Arrian, *Anabasis* 3.16.4–5. Bks. 3 and 7 of Arrian's *Anabasis* depict Alexander's attitudes toward local deities after his invasion of Babylonia. In bk. 3 Arrian says that although the Persian Emperor Xerxes had previously destroyed a temple in Babylon, Alexander decided to rebuild it on the same site. Bk. 7 reports that upon entering Babylon, Alexander commanded the rebuilding of the temple of the chief deity in the Babylonian pantheon. The temple had also been destroyed by Xerxes. In nn. 47–8 Hume refers to a small part of Arrian's *Anabasis*. Also pertinent are *Anabasis* 3.1.5; 3.6.1.1; 3.7.6; 3.16.9; 3.25.1; 7.24.4, 7.25.3–6; 7.28.1–2.

**62.3 AUGUSTUS . . . CAIUS CÆSAR . . . by the PAGANS esteemed ignoble and barbarous.<sup>49]</sup>** Footnote reference: Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars* 2, 'Augustus' 93. Suetonius reports that 'Augustus . . . not only refrained from taking a small detour to see Apis . . . when he was travelling in Egypt, but also greatly praised his grandson Gaius because he did not offer prayers at Jerusalem when passing by Judaea'. It was common for Gentiles to send offerings or make sacrifices upon the altar. Jews sometimes offered sacrifices for the Roman emperor, and the emperor sometimes contributed toward their cost.

**n. 50 *Corruptio optimi pessima*]** This expression—'The worst state is a corruption of the best'—is not from any classical writer, but Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* may have been a distant source. Aristotle asserts that tyranny is the worst of three forms of corruption (or perversion) of the best form of government, which is monarchy (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1160<sup>a</sup>31–1160<sup>b</sup>11). Hume's expressions 'the corruption of the best things gives rise to the worst' (*NHR* 10.1) and 'the corruption of the best things begets the worst' (*NHR* 11.1) appear to be his translations of this same Latin expression. Hume begins his essay 'Of Superstition and Enthusiasm' by quoting and discussing the maxim 'That the corruption of the best things produces the worst', connecting the saying to 'corruptions of true religion' by superstition and enthusiasm.

62.10 **human sacrifices of the CARTHAGINIANS]** The Carthaginians (among others) practised royal sacrifices. The king was regarded as the source of sacred energy, which diminishes over time. The energy was believed renewable by sacrificing the king, who thereafter qualified as an object of worship. The Carthaginians sometimes substituted another person for the king, choosing an individual as close to royal status as possible. Commonly one of the king's sons was chosen, a custom that led to the Carthaginian practice of the sacrifice of children. Diodorus Siculus<sup>B</sup> reported that the Carthaginians sacrificed hundreds of children when they aspired to make amends to the gods. Their practice was to roll the children down from an image of Cronus into a pit filled with fire. See *Historical Library* 20.14.2–6. Diodorus also mentions connections between the Carthaginians and the Tyrians, to whom Hume refers in n. 51. Although various forms of sacrifice occurred in Tyre, little is known about human sacrifice.

62.11 **MEXICANS]** Evidence of practices in Mexico had been collected primarily from Spanish sources during the Spanish Conquest of 1518–21. The Aztecs, by these accounts, engaged in human sacrifices at festival commencements, usually sacrificing prisoners of war in the hope of inducing favours from the gods. The priests justified the practice by saying that the gods were famished and desirous of being worshipped, and that a victim had a path to the heavenly afterlife with the gods. The usual method of sacrifice involved a stone on which the victim was lain, nude and fully stretched. When the body cavity was cleaved, the heart was deftly removed by the priest and offered to the sun. The bodies of the dead were then distributed and eaten. Other forms of human sacrifice in Mexico involved pounding the head against a large rock in the temple, slitting the throat, beheading, and half-roasting the victim in a fire. After the sacrifice, the victims might be skinned and the skins worn as garments representing the divine. See Durán, *Book of the Gods and Rites*, pp. 91–5, 145–8, 175–80, 204–5, 212–16, 233–5, 242–4.

62.11 **inquisition and persecutions of ROME and MADRID]** Formal proceedings of the Inquisition began at least as early as 1184. Measures of suppression included excommunication, imprisonment, the death penalty, and confiscation or destruction of property. Those who did not recant their 'heresies' were brought to trial in secret hearings, with no right to counsel or legal assistance. Torture was common. Despite a long-standing papal denunciation of torture, Pope Innocent IV authorized its use in 1252. Unrecanted heresy often led to a sentence of burning at the stake or a similarly violent means of death. The Holy Office of the Inquisition was revived through a brief dated 14 Jan. 1542. Known as the Roman Inquisition, it was established primarily to combat Protestantism.

The Spanish Inquisition was established in 1478. The original purpose was to search for and punish heretics, but an underlying purpose was to end Jewish influence in Spain. Over 10,000 persons were burned, 100,000 imprisoned, and the Jews expelled in 1492. Hume (or his editor, Kames) cryptically ridicules the criteria

used for accusations of atheism during the Spanish Inquisition in *A Letter from a Gentleman* 31.

62.17 **fatal vengeance of inquisitors]** ‘Inquisitor’ was commonly used to refer to a judge of the Spanish Inquisition.

62.21 **temple of DIANA . . . installed his successor.<sup>52</sup>**] Footnote references: Strabo, *Geography* 5.3.12; Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars* 4, ‘Gaius Caligula’ 35.3. In early Roman religion there were several principal holy places or cult centres. Diana was worshipped in a temple in the Alban Hills in the grove of Aricia at the volcanic mountain Lake Nemi. The worship of spiritual powers included reading omens, charms, and taboos. The priest at the temple, who bore the title of king, could achieve that office only by killing the incumbent king in combat. Suetonius reports that Gaius Caligula secretly engaged a man willing to attack the king of Nemi. Volunteers for such a challenge were found among runaway, fugitive slaves. In order to succeed in the challenge, they were required to kill the reigning king with a sword. Strabo characterizes these religious traditions as barbaric. The temple’s worshippers, he reports, once made a runaway slave the priest after he had killed his predecessor. Because of this incident, the priest was always armed with a sword lest another try to gain his office.

#### SECTION 10: With regard to Courage or Abasement

63.7 **monkish virtues]** Hume also mentions ‘monkish virtues’ at *EPM* 9.3. The list found there is somewhat different from the list here (and some terms on the lists carried somewhat different meanings, both within and outside Roman Catholic traditions, than they do today). Some of these ‘virtues’ had been defended by Blaise Pascal, whose views—along with those of St Dominic and St Ignatius of Loyola—drew comments from Hume in *EPM*, Dial. 54. See also Hume’s comment on ‘monkish historians’ in his *History of England* (chs. 1–3, 5 [1: 14, 38, 132, 240]); and the treatment of monkish virtues in Adam Smith (1723–90; Scottish philosopher and economist), *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* 3.2 (pp. 229–31).

Hume’s conception of monks, their proclaimed virtues, and their position in society is explored in his *History of England*. There he writes that ‘The great encrease of monasteries, if matters be considered merely in a political light, will appear [will show] the radical inconvenience of the catholic religion. . . . Papal usurpations, the tyranny of the inquisition, the multiplicity of holidays; all these fetters on liberty and industry were ultimately derived from the authority and insinuation of monks, whose habitations, being established every where, proved so many seminaries of superstition and of folly. . . . Though monks were the true preservers, as well as inventors, of the dreaming and captious philosophy of the schools, no manly or elegant knowledge could be expected among men, whose lives, condemned to a

tedious uniformity, and deprived of all emulation, afforded nothing to raise the mind, or cultivate the genius' (ch. 31 [3: 227, 229]).

**63.15 heroes in paganism]** These heroes figure in ancient pagan mythology. (1) HERCULES, or Heracles, was portrayed as prodigiously strong, adventuresome, good-humoured, generous, courageous, and compassionate (although also given to the vices of gluttony, lust, and a violent temper). (2) THESEUS, in Greek legend an Athenian hero and early king, was portrayed as an ideal athlete, as performing unique feats of strength, and as a military hero. In character, he is valiant, spirited, and highly intelligent. (3) HECTOR, the Trojan hero of the *Iliad*, is a figure of compassion and tenderness. He pursued peace in the war, yet was the bravest, most skilled, and noblest of the Trojan warriors. Aware that he was doomed to certain death, he faced his destiny with great courage. (4) ROMULUS, legendary founder of Rome made the city an asylum for fugitives. Although a spirited, peaceful, and wise ruler, Romulus was also at times quarrelsome, cunning, and even vindictive. Romulus and Theseus are mentioned in a related context in Hume's essay 'Of Parties in General' 1.

**63.15 saints in popery]** (1) DOMINIC, founder of the Dominican Order, preached against heresies, social evils, luxury, and clerical indolence. He is admired for his tenderness, devotion, compassion, humility, and obedience. (2) FRANCIS, founder of the Franciscan Order, devoted himself to service of the poor. He is venerated for his simplicity, moderation, spiritual devotion, charitable acts, and humility. (3) There are two St Antony's: (a) ANTONY OF EGYPT (3rd century AD) is celebrated for his austerity, humility, inner peacefulness, and dedication to prayer. (b) ANTONY OF PADUA (13th century AD), a Franciscan priest, was distinguished as a patron of the poor. The combination of his learning, eloquence, and charismatic presence attracted crowds for his preaching. (4) BENEDICT of Nursia founded the Benedictine Order. Both Romans and barbarians reportedly flocked to him because of his personal virtues and miraculous and prophetic powers. He was renowned for his holiness, devotion to monastic ideals, and authorship of a monastic code.

Hume discusses the early Dominicans and Franciscans in a different light in his *History of England*. He considers their 'perpetual rivalry with each other in promoting their gainful superstitions' and their 'pretending a desire of poverty and a contempt for riches' in order to gain 'a great dominion over the minds, and consequently over the purses of men'. 'Thus', he says, 'the several orders of monks became a kind of regular troops or garrisons of the Romish church; and though the temporal interests of society, still more the cause of true piety, were hurt, by their various devices to captivate the populace, they proved the chief supports of that mighty fabric of superstition, and, till the revival of true learning, secured it from any dangerous invasion' (ch. 12 [2: 71–2]).

**63.16 holy dervises in MAHOMETANISM]** These were figures of a Muslim religious order in the mystic tradition renowned for devotional exercises and austerity. Only a small number of Muslims were dervises. The word 'dervise' or 'dervish' derives

from the Persian word for ‘mendicant’ (*darwesh* or *derwish*). The repetition of religious formulae accompanied by precisely structured bodily motions is common in the rituals. As the exercise develops, the motions become increasingly rapid (described as a ‘whirling dance’ by European travellers), ending in ecstasy and possibly a trance. Often performed using chants, the exercises may also be done in silence. A few orders use self-laceration. Some exercises involve austere acts, including long hours of prayer and meditation. In a book available to Hume, Turner refers to this tradition as a ‘subordinate sect’ (*History of All Religions in the World*, pp. 300–1).

The ‘dervises of Constantinople’ are mentioned below, at *NHR* 12.4. In *THN* 1.4.7.13, Hume mentions some dervises, monks, and Cynics as exhibiting ‘great extravagancies of conduct’.

**63.22 ALEXANDER . . . HERCULES and BACCHUS . . . excelled.**<sup>53]</sup> Footnote reference: Arrian, *Anabasis, passim*, esp. 4.10.5–7; 4.28.4; and 5.26.5. Arrian reports that the Macedonians deemed Alexander more worthy of divinity than Dionysus and Hercules, whose courage and ambition Alexander accepted as both a model and a personal challenge. Neither of these gods had direct connections with Macedon. In ‘Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences’ 18, Hume discusses Alexander’s conviction that he was *not* a god.

**63.24 BRASIDAS . . . defence he had embraced.**<sup>54]</sup> Footnote reference: Thucydides, *History* 5.10–11. Brasidas was honoured for heroic courage and military brilliance, as well as for honesty, moderation, discipline, and a sense of justice. He once captured the Athenian colony of Amphipolis, which he subsequently ruled and defended. Thucydides reports that after a mortal wound in a battle near Amphipolis, Brasidas was brought ‘yet breathing into the city’, where he died and was buried. The citizens of that city awarded him the honours of a hero and generously attributed the founding of the colony to him. Sacrifices were offered in his honour, and games were celebrated in his name annually thereafter.

**63.29 the observation of MACHIAVEL,**<sup>55]</sup> Footnote reference: Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discorsi* 2.2.6–7 (see Cat.). Machiavelli comments on modernity’s lack of devotion to liberty, as compared to the ancients. His premiss is that some differences are traceable to the pagan and Christian religions, with the latter placing more emphasis on humble, gentle, and contemplative values that ultimately lead to the exaltation of suffering and a weakening of resistance to authority.

**64.4 BRASIDAS . . . defend itself.”**<sup>56]</sup> Footnote reference: Plutarch, *Moralia*, ‘Sayings of Kings and Commanders’, Brasidas 1, 190B. Plutarch quotes Brasidas as saying, upon catching a mouse (which bit him), that no living creature is too small to have the survival instinct or to attempt to defend itself from marauders.

**64.6 BELLARMINE . . . present life.”**<sup>57]</sup> Footnote reference: Pierre Bayle, *Dictionary*, ‘Bellarmine’, 1: 734–5, including note [Z]. Bayle reported that Bellarmine

wished to live a simple life as a Jesuit, even to the point of giving flies ‘the Liberty to fly, and light, where they pleased’. He mentions a source as follows:

*Among the remarkable Virtues of Bellarmin, others place his wonderful Patience, in enduring Vexations, which James Fuligatti celebrates in the following Words: ‘He considered Gnats, a little flying Insect, and other small Vexations, . . . as sent by GOD, to exercise our Patience; and he suffered them so calmly, that he neither endeavoured to drive them away with his own Hand, nor permitted any one else to do it. . . . He would not drive the Flies from his Face, though they were extreamly troublesome, as is usual at Rome, in hot Weather; which when the Standers by expressed their Wonder at, he mildly told them, It was unjust to disturb those little Creatures, whose only Paradice is the Liberty of flying, and resting, where they please.’*

### SECTION 11: With regard to Reason or Absurdity

65.27 **the Alcoran]** The term is an archaic form of the Koran (or Qur'an, from Al-Qur'an), literally meaning ‘The Reading’. Sale’s influential translation of 1734 was entitled *The Koran, Commonly called The Alcoran of Mohammed*. The Koran is comprised of writings accepted in Islam as authentic revelations made to Muhammad by Allah (regarded as the same God who made revelations to Abraham, Moses, and Jesus), as delivered through the angel Gabriel. The book is sometimes said to be ‘the reading of the man who knew not how to read’, a metaphorical reference to Muhammad’s ‘reading’ of God’s word even though he could not read in the standard sense. The words came to Muhammad in a trance. The aim of the Koran is to re-establish the monotheistic tradition of the Semitic prophets and to detail a comprehensive system of morality.

Hume discusses moral precepts in ‘the Alcoran’ in ‘Of the Standard of Taste’ 4, and discusses the implications of the ‘violent precepts’ of the *Alcoran* in his *History of England* (ch. 5; cf. ann. at 61.23 (on NHR 9.3, MAHOMETANISM . . . bloody principles)). Prideaux cast a negative light on the history and teachings of the *Alcoran* in *True Nature of Imposture Fully Display'd*, 16 ff., 37 ff., 116 ff.; see also disapproving depictions in Hyde, ‘Historical and Critical Reflections Upon Mahometanism and Socinianism’, Nathan Bailey’s *Dictionarium Britannicum* (entry ‘Alcoran’), and the later views of Gibbon in *Life of Mahomet* (from *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*), esp. 19–20. Sale’s ‘Preliminary Discourse’ is more sympathetic. Numerous works specifically on the *Alcoran* were available to Hume in French, Latin, and English.

65.30 **education]** instruction by acculturation or habituation. See THN 1.3.9.17, which characterizes ‘education’ in terms of ‘opinions and notions of things, to which we have been accustom'd from our infancy’.

66.4 **all popular theology . . . most unintelligible sophisms].** The themes in this passage are explored many times in Hume’s *History of England*, with special

reference to Protestant and Catholic theologies. Context is given there for his saying here 'especially the scholastic'.

66.18 **the definition of ARIAN . . . &c.]** Each form of dissent listed has been denounced as a Christian heresy by an official Roman Catholic body (see the anns. below). In *A Letter from a Gentleman* 25, Hume (or his editor, Kames) writes that 'In Reality, whence come all the various Tribes of Hereticks, the *Arians*, *Socinians* and *Deists*, but from too great a Confidence in mere human Reason, which they regard as the *Standard* of every Thing, and which they will not submit to the superior Light of Revelation?' In his *History of England*, while discussing the Protestant reformers, Hume says: 'When men were once settled in their particular sects, and had fortified themselves in a habitual detestation of those who were denominated heretics, they adhered with more obstinacy to the principles of their education; and the limits of the two religions thenceforth remained fixed and unchangeable' (ch. 31 [3: 211]).

66.18 **ARIAN]** The Arian heresy dates from 318–20. Alexandrian priest Arius (3rd–4th century) maintained that the Godhead is indivisible and that the Father existed prior to and begot the Son, thus denying the Son's eternity and giving the Son a subordinate position. Arius maintained that Christ became divine at the Resurrection. His theology was interpreted as denying the divinity of both Christ and the Holy Spirit, beliefs for which Arius was excommunicated in 320 by the Alexandrian Synod. At the Council of Nicaea in 325 Arius's views were condemned as blasphemous, and the anti-Arian Creed of Nicaea was formulated. The final doctrine pronounced that the Father and Son are of one substance. See ann. 78.26 ff. (on *NHR* n. 78, on Newton, Locke, and Clarke as Arians or Socinians), and Bayle, *Dictionary*, 'Arius'.

66.18 **PELAGIAN]** Chambers provides one eighteenth-century perspective on the Romano-British monk Pelagius (4th–5th century): 'Pelagius, properly call'd Morgan, was an Irish Monk, Cotemporary with St Jerome, and St Augustin. . . . He absolutely denied all original Sin, which he held to be the mere Invention of St Augustin; and taught that Men are entire Masters of their Actions, perfectly free Creatures, in opposition to all Predestination, Reprobation, Election, &c' (*Cyclopædia*, 'Pelagians'). The Pelagian heresy rests on a doctrine of free will as the key element in human perfectibility and limits the role of divine grace and original sin. Divine grace is viewed as a facilitation of what the will can do on its own, and Adam's sin is not regarded as affecting other persons. St Augustine responded in vigorous opposition. There were several official condemnations of Pelagianism.

66.18 **ERASTIAN]** The Erastian heresy refers to those who contest the supremacy of the Church over secular governors. Claims of heresy rest on affirmation of the doctrine of the rightful authority of the State over the Church even in ecclesiastical affairs. This 'heresy' is named after Thomas Erastus (1524–83; Swiss physician and Protestant theologian), who published his views in 1568. There has been controversy as to whether Erastus was an 'Erastian', because he held only the relatively weak thesis that under a Christian ruler there is no need for a corrective

authority other than that of the State, and that there should not be a religious authority with coercive powers independent of the State's powers.

**66.18 SOCINIAN]** The Socinian heresy derives from Protestant anti-trinitarian teachings developed in Italy, Poland, Germany, Holland, and Great Britain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The heresy is named after two Italian theologians named Sozzino (or Sozini), but known by their Latin names: Laelius Socinus (1525–62) and Faustus Socinus (1539–1604). Both associated with Protestant reformers and both left the Roman Catholic Church. Laelius insisted on free theological enquiry, but did not hold radical anti-trinitarian views. Faustus maintained that the ascended Christ was not divine by *nature* but was divine by *office*. Unitarians were influenced by various Socinian views, and many thinkers in the late seventeenth century were publicly accused of Socinianism. The term 'Socinian' sustained an array of connotations in seventeenth-century theological disputes. The term was often used pejoratively in reference to free-thinkers and those of unorthodox views. See ann. n. 78.26 ff. (on *NHR* n. 78, on Newton, Locke, and Clarke (as Arians or Socinians)); and Bayle, *Dictionary*, 'Socinus (Faustus)'.

**66.18 SABELLIAN]** The Sabellian heresy is a trinitarian heresy named after the Roman Christian prelate and theologian Sabellius (fl. 3rd century). It emphasizes the unity of God the Father to the point of making the Son's subsistence and person dependent on that of the Father. Sabellius was excommunicated c. 217–20 on grounds of Monarchianism—the doctrine of the essential unity and indivisible substance of the deity (a doctrine intended to reinforce monotheism). Sabellianism, Arianism, and Socinianism were widely discussed forms of non-trinitarian theology, and the label 'Sabellian' came to be attached to various Monarchian doctrines.

**66.19 EUTYCHIAN]** The Eutychian heresy is a form of Monophysitism, a Christological heresy insisting on one nature in Christ, which is divine and not human. The heresy is linked to the Byzantine monk Eutyches (4th–5th century), who held that after the joining of the divine with the human in Christ there were no longer two natures. This heresy consists in the belief that Christ's flesh is not consubstantial with human flesh, which seemed to Eutyches' critics to entail that the Word never truly became flesh. Eutyches refused to recant before the Council of Constantinople in 448, and was deposed from his position in a monastery. After a brief restoration, he was condemned and exiled in 451 by the Council of Chalcedon, which unequivocally supported the two-natures doctrine.

**66.19 NESTORIAN]** The Nestorian heresy derives from unorthodox views about Christ and the Virgin Mary defended by archbishop of Constantinople, Nestorius (4th–5th century). In opposition to Arianism, he held a Christology of two natures or substances in Christ: a divine nature and a human nature. Nestorius refused to attribute to the divine nature the human acts and suffering of Jesus. He also held that the Virgin Mary was the mother of Christ but not the mother of God. On this latter premiss, he reasoned, divine nature would be born of a human woman, whereas

Mary had begotten only a man. In 431 Nestorius was condemned as a heretic and driven out of the Byzantine Empire. (See Bayle, *Dictionary*, 'Nestorius'.)

66.19 **MONOTHELITE]** The Monothelite heresy was a seventh-century Incarnation heresy advocating that Christ had two natures, divine and human, but that the two natures are manifested as one will. As Christ has only one will and is divine, he never performed distinctly human acts. The doctrine was initially promulgated in 624 by Byzantine emperor Heraclius in an attempt to end theological controversy. However, exponents of the view that Christ had no human will were condemned by several papal pronouncements between 640 and 649. At an ecumenical council in 680–1, Monothelitism was condemned, and Christ was officially proclaimed to have both a divine will and a free human will, which function in harmony.

66.23 **SCHOLASTIC RELIGION]** 'Scholastic religion' refers to Roman Catholic teachings integrated and supported by philosophy and theology in schools and universities. Chambers provides this perspective: 'School Divinity, is that Part of Divinity which clears and discusses Questions, by means of Reason, and Arguments: In which Sense, it stands, in good measure, opposed to positive Divinity, which is founded on the Authority of Fathers, Councils, &c' (*Cyclopædia*, 'Scholastic'). The term 'scholasticism' was often used to refer to philosophical and dogmatic theologies promulgated during the period from approximately the tenth through the fifteenth centuries. Hume several times refers to Scholastic doctrines in his writings. In his Index to *ETSS* (see p. 277 in this volume), Hume phrased his entry as 'Scholastic Religion, its usual Absurdity'.

## SECTION 12: With regard to Doubt or Conviction

67.5 **CAMBYESES . . . APIS]** Apis was an Egyptian bull-god of Memphis, where the reigning bull occupied an extravagant residence with walkways and courts. In the artistic representation of Apis the body is typically black, with a square or triangular white spot on the forehead. Cambyses, upon entering Memphis, found the inhabitants of the city engaged in a festival celebrating the reappearance of Apis. Apparently convinced that he was the subject of ridicule in the celebration, Cambyses had the sacred bull brought before him and killed with a dagger. He ordered punishment of the priests. In the passage from Suetonius cited earlier by Hume (n. 49), the worship of Apis is briefly mentioned.

67.8 **HERODOTUS]** Hume inserted an additional footnote at this point in the 1757–70 edns. of *NHR*. The note read (in the edn. of 1770, p. 295): 'Lib. iii. c. 38'. The reference was to Herodotus, *History* 3.38, a passage that Hume here partially paraphrases; however, only *History* 3.27–30 explains the particular story to which Hume here refers. In these four chapters Herodotus presents the historical

information that Hume reviews, relating, first, the incident involving the bull and, second, the evidence for the attribution of madness to Cambyses.

67.14 **communion]** union of persons joined by a commonly held religious faith and set of rites.

67.16 **AVERROËS]** Averroës held many views in opposition to Christian beliefs. Hume's attribution to Averroës of this remark about the doctrine of transubstantiation (referred to at *NHR* 12.3 as the 'real presence') likely derives from Bayle, *Dictionary*, 'Averroës', 1: 552–61. Bayle presents precisely the statement Hume here attributes to Averroës and cites specific sources of the quote.

The first source mentioned by Bayle is Jean Daillé (1594–1670; theologian), who, in his *Réplique aux deux livres que Messieurs Adam et Cottiby* 1.16 relates that Jacques Davy (Cardinal) Du Perron (1565–1618) reports in his *Traitt du saint sacrament de l'Eucharistie . . . refutation du livre du Sieur du Plessis Mornay* 3.29 (p. 973) that a Jesuit named Sarga (also 'Scarga') had said that Averroës 'found no sect worse, or weaker, than That of the Christians, who, themselves, eat, and break to pieces, the God, whom they adore'. Bayle says that the original source that quoted Sarga appears to be 'De Plessis'—i.e. Philippe de Mornai [Mornay], seigneur du Plessis-Marly (1549–1623; also referred to as Du Plessis-Mornay and Du Plessis-Marly), in his *De l'institution, usage et doctrine du saint sacrament de l'Eucharistie* (p. 1106; also available to Hume in an English translation). Du Plessis had a celebrated public disputation at Fontainebleau with Du Perron in 1600 regarding the Roman Catholic eucharistic doctrine.

Another source cited by Bayle is Charles Drelincourt (1595–1669; minister of the Calvinist Church at Paris), who often wrote in opposition to Roman Catholic theology. His statement, as reported by Bayle, seems closest to Hume's paraphrase. Drelincourt is said to have reported that Averroës, 'having seen the Sacrament eaten, which had before been adored, said, *That he had never seen a more foolish, or more ridiculous Sect, than That of the Christians, who adore That, which they eat*' (*Dialogues familiers sur les principales objections des missionnaires de ce temps*, pp. 305–6).

67.20 **real presence]** This term (used by Catholics and non-Catholics alike) refers to that into which the substance of the bread and wine of the sacrament of Holy Communion are allegedly transformed. Their accidental properties do not change, but their substance does. St Thomas Aquinas offered a detailed analysis (*Summa theologiae* 3a.75–7); and several Councils (Fourth Lateran Council, 1215; Council of Constance, 1414–18; Council of Florence, 1439; Council of Trent, 1562) published influential accounts of the real presence. They agree that the whole substance of bread and the whole substance of wine are converted by divine power into the whole substance of the body and blood of Christ—so that the presence is real, not symbolic or metaphorical.

In his *History of England*, Hume several times discusses the historical importance of this doctrine and what he takes to be the absurd and superstitious beliefs of Roman Catholics that produced it. He writes that 'the real presence [is

the] . . . doctrine, . . . among the numberless victories of superstition over common sense, [whose] triumph is the most signal and egregious. . . . It was the last doctrine of popery, that was wholly abandoned by the people [during the course of the Protestant Reformation]. . . . The chief cause was really the extreme absurdity of the principle itself, and the profound veneration, which of course it impressed on the imagination. The priests likewise were much inclined to favour an opinion, which attributed to them so miraculous a power; and the people, who believed, that they participated of the very body and blood of their Saviour, were loth to renounce so extraordinary, and as they imagined, so salutary a privilege' (chs. 32 and 34 [3: 261, 365]). In *EHU* 10.1, Hume discusses criticisms of the doctrine by John Tillotson (1630–94; English preacher and theologian). See also the annotation immediately above on Averroës.

67.24 **counter**] a round piece of wood, metal (often stamped brass), or ivory. The term derived from use of the item in counting, keeping accounts, and arithmetical operations, but generally referred to imitation coins or tokens.

67.32 **doctors of the SORBONNE**] professors at the theological college in the University of Paris. The college was founded c. 1257, and gained distinction in the late Middle Ages and early modern period, when Sorbonne professors rendered influential opinions on theological and ecclesiastic controversies. The faculty came to be called the Sorbonne in the sixteenth century. See also ann. 68.33 at *NHR* 12.7 below.

67.33 **dervises of CONSTANTINOPLE**] On 'dervise' generally, see ann. 63.16 at *NHR* 10.3, dervises in MAHOMETANISM. In 1668 Paul Rycaut published the book *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire containing . . . The Most Material Points of the Mahometan Religion*. In it he stated his official position as 'Embassador Extraordinary for his Majesty Charles the Second . . . to Sultan Mahomet Han the Fourth, Emperour of the Turks' (title-page). During his five years in Constantinople, Rycaut gathered information pertaining to religious practices, and devoted a chapter of his book to religious men and dervises, also called '*Mevelevee*'. He describes them as aspiring to 'great Patience, Humility, Modesty, Charity and Silence'. He reports that after sermons and other parts of religious services, the dervises 'begin to turn round, some of them with that swift motion that their faces can scarce be seen'. Rycaut describes the dervises of Constantinople as being (contrary to Islamic prohibitions) addicted to strong wine, intoxicating liquors, and opium, which raise their spirits and foster devotion. (Ch. 13, 'Of the Dervises'.) Perhaps coincidentally, during his discussion of dervises, Rycaut also mentions Capuchin friars (p. 138); see second ann. below.

68.19 **ambassador from TUNIS**] Hume was more than once lodged in hotels in Paris. He is probably referring to a time before 1753, perhaps while on a diplomatic mission during the last half of 1748.

68.23 **some Capuchin friars . . . FRANCISCANS**] Capuchins are friars of an austere branch of the order of St Francis dedicated to missionary work. They wear the

same type of clothes that St Francis wore, including the *capuche*, or *capuccio*, a long, pointed cowl or hood. Capuchins were prominent in attending to, and popular among, the uneducated masses in Europe.

**68.31 prince of SALLEE, speaking of de RUYTER]** In 1641, while occupied as a trader, Admiral Michel de Ruyter<sup>B</sup> stopped in Morocco, where he journeyed inland to show his samples to the prince of Sallee, Sidi Ali ben Mohammed ben Moussa.<sup>B</sup> The following transaction allegedly occurred: The prince offered a price well below the value of a cloth that de Ruyter was trading. When de Ruyter declined the offer, the prince threatened to confiscate the cloth; but de Ruyter said he would rather give the merchandise to the prince than trade at such a low price. The prince departed, but said to his attendants upon leaving that it is a pity that *such a man* is a Christian. Later the prince returned and commented that de Ruyter's honesty and determination should set an example for everyone. This story is presented by de Ruyter's biographer, P. Blok (*Life of Admiral de Ruyter*, pp. 26–8). However, Gerard Brandt's *La Vie de Michel de Ruiter* may have been Hume's source for the story. Brandt gives an account closely resembling Hume's (here translated, with the spelling 'Ruiter' retained):

'I cannot', said Ruiter, 'part with my master's goods for a price that is below their value.' At this there were strong words between them, so Ruiter judged it appropriate to tell him that because he was not able to sell the piece of cloth at such a bargain price, he preferred to make him a present of it. 'What,' responded the Sultan, 'you have the power to give away the goods of your master for nothing, and you don't have the power to sell them for the price I am offering you?' Ruiter responded, 'I cannot sell it at such a low price without incurring a loss on the sale of my other merchandise; but I can without any consequence make a present in the case of a necessity, and to avoid bigger trouble.' The Sultan, not wanting to go on in this fashion, began to make threats. 'Do you know', he said 'that I can arrest you, and detain your vessel with all of its cargo?' 'I know it well,' replied Ruiter, 'but if you abuse me in such a way, you will show the world that one cannot trust your words'; to this he added, 'if I am your prisoner, put me up for ransom, and I will try to pay you'. At that the Sultan, entering into an extreme fury, redoubled his threats, and Ruiter, angry in turn, said to him, 'If I were on my vessel, you wouldn't threaten me like that.' The Sultan thus retired to another room, clenching his teeth, and stomping his feet, and said in his language, 'Isn't it too bad that such a man is a Christian?' (pp. 12–13)

**68.33 worship leeks and onions]** In the work Hume cites in n. 81 (but in a different section), Juvenal reports that the leek and the onion were objects of sanctity and worship in a few places in Egypt: 'None adore Diana, but it is an impious outrage to crush leeks and onions with the teeth. What a holy race to have such divinities springing up in their gardens!' (Juvenal, *Satires* 15.1–13). The worship and deification of leeks and onions by the ancients was an example used by Hobbes (*Leviathan* 12.16; 44.11) and by Malebranche in a discussion of religion and the cause of good and evil (*Search after Truth* 6.2.3). At Num. 11: 5 there is a biblical reference to the Jews' remembrance of leeks and onions as a food of Egypt, but without reference to Egyptian religious practices.

68.33 **SORBONNIST]** See ann. 67.32 (on *NHR* 12.4). Sorbonnists are ‘those Doctors and Batchelors of Divinity of the Colledge of *Sorbon in Paris*’ (Blount, *Glossographia*, ‘Sorbonists’). The faculty at the Sorbonne maintained a conservative theological curriculum.

68.34 **priest of SAIS]** In the ancient Egyptian city of Sais, the chief deity and proclaimed foundress was Neith, Net, or Nit, an ancient goddess with pre-dynastic origins. She was worshipped at all temples in Sais, including those of other gods. Neith was considered the mother of Osiris, and Sais was also referred to as the ‘City of Osiris’. (Plato reported that the Egyptians said that Neith is identical to the Hellenic Athena, and that the inhabitants of Sais believed themselves in some way related to Athenians (*Timaeus* 21E).) Many animals, birds, and reptiles were worshipped at Sais.

n. 58.1–5 **EGYPTIAN religion . . . resemblance to the JEWISH . . . EGYPTIAN and JEWISH proselytes were banished from ROME]** Footnote references: Tacitus, *Annals* 2.85; Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars* 3, ‘Tiberius’ 36. Tacitus and Suetonius, as well as Dio Cassius Cocceianus (2nd–3rd century AD; politician and historian of Rome) and Josephus (1st century AD; governor of Galilee and Jewish historian), are the four classical sources for the account of the senate decree under which the proselytes were banished. *Suetonius* asserts that ‘Tiberius suppressed foreign religious practices, such as the Egyptian and Jewish rites, and compelled those who subscribed to that superstition to burn the apparel and all the trappings of their religion.’ *Tacitus* asserts that ‘They discussed the expulsion of the Egyptian and Jewish religions, and there was a senate decree that four thousand freedmen of a suitable age, who had been tinged with that superstition, should be transported to the island of Sardinia, there to suppress piracy; and if they died from the unhealthy climate, it was a trifling loss. The rest were to leave Italy unless they had renounced their profane rites before the stated day.’

Tacitus and Suetonius lump together the Jewish and Egyptian rites, suggesting that they are ‘the same’ religion. However, the two rites may have been grouped together by the Romans for reasons such as the need to prevent the spread of both Isis worship and Judaism. The accounts found in Josephus and Dio Cassius are probably more reliable. They treat the expulsion of the Jews as independent of the expulsion of Egyptians. See Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 57.5a (7: 162–3); Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18.81–4 (9: 58–61).

69.7 **blind and bigotted attachment]** Hume is perhaps referring to the uncharitable, but common, practice of attempting to defend one religion or sect by pointing to the most unattractive features of others. This form of argument had been used against Islam and other religions by European writers. See the authors named at ann. 61.23 ff. (on *NHR* 9.3).

69.11 **DIODORUS SICULUS<sup>59</sup> . . . killing a cat]** Footnote reference: Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library* 1.83.8–9. Diodorus describes the cult of the cat in ancient Egypt, and observes that the Egyptian superstition affected Ptolemaic

Egypt's political relations with Rome. The Egyptians were eager to court Rome's favour, but the accidental killing of a cat by a visiting Roman diplomat precipitated punishment by a frenzied Egyptian mob.

**69.18 voted AUGUSTUS... Præsens divus habebitur AUGUSTUS]** The clause is from Horace, *Odes* 3, ode 5, lines 2–3. It may be translated 'Instantly will Augustus be judged divine'. This clause means that Augustus will be deemed a presently existing god, without implying that he resides in a particular location or has an overriding, supreme authority. Horace often wrote in praise of the gods and showed devotion to Augustus. In this passage, he addresses both Jove and Augustus. That Augustus was deemed a god is unmistakable in Horace. However, that he wielded such power as to cause the people to dethrone every god in heaven must be conjectured on the basis of the passage or learned from another source.

**n. 60.1 Louis the XIVth... College of CLERMONT]** The Latin in n. 60 may be translated: 'They carried from thence the insignia of Christ and set up those of the king: impious people, who cannot recognize any other God.' Different versions of the Latin wording have been handed down, but they have substantially the same meaning.

Initial donations were insufficient to sustain the Collège de Clermont, and its existence was threatened by a devalued currency and poor financial management. Louis XIV rescued the institution through royal patronage and declared himself financial benefactor. These royal initiatives led some to believe that a change of name was warranted to Collège Louis-Le-Grand, thereby acknowledging the college's second 'founder'. The Jesuits agreed to the renaming. Louis' name was engraved in gold letters above the entrance to the college in October 1682. In the archives of the Jesuit fathers, the following is recorded: *Ludovici Magni nomen, aureis literis, in Collegii fronte, inscrpsimus.* ('The Name of Ludwig the Great we have inscribed in gold letters on the façade of the College').

The name 'Clermont' did not need to be erased from the façade of the college's entrance because it had never been displayed there. Only the words 'Collegium Societatis Jesus' had been so placed, despite the fact that the name 'Clermont' had become the traditional name of the college. Those who opposed the change of name regarded it as scandalous and sacrilegious, because, in place of the name of Jesus, the Fathers were substituting the name of the king. However, some Jesuits pointed out that the college had originally been named by persons who persecuted the Jesuit order. (Dupont-Ferrier, *Du Collège de Clermont*, 1: 7–11.)

**70.1 TULLY,<sup>61</sup>... author in another place,<sup>62</sup>]** Footnote references: n. 61: Cicero, *De natura deorum* 1.29.81–2; n. 62: Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 5.27.78. In *De natura deorum* Cicero (Tully) writes on sacrilege and Egyptian respect: 'For we have often seen temples robbed and images of gods carried off from the holiest shrines by our fellow-countrymen, but no one ever even heard of an Egyptian laying profane hands on a crocodile or ibis or cat.' In *Tusculan Disputations* Cicero

writes about Egyptian superstitions: 'Who does not know of the custom of the Egyptians? Their minds are infected with degraded superstitions and they would sooner submit to any torment than injure an ibis or asp or cat or dog or crocodile.' In *De natura deorum* 1.36.100–1 Cicero notes that the Egyptians deified animals for their utility—e.g. by worshipping the ibis, which destroyed snakes.

**70.6 DRYDEN... ABSALOM and ACHITOPHEL]** The reference is to John Dryden, 'Absalom and Achitophel', lines 100–3. This satirical poem discusses the oppression of the heathens and sacrilege against their gods under David's reign in Jerusalem: 'This [their gods having been disgraced under David's government] set the Heathen Priesthood in a flame;/For Priests of all Religions are the same' (lines 98–9).

**70.24 PETRONIUS... parts of ITALY]** The reference is to Petronius, *Satyricon*, §17. In his story, a character named Quartilla makes the following observation about gods in Italy: 'The gods walk abroad so commonly in our streets that it is easier to meet a god than a man.'

**70.33 VARRO... AUGUSTINE... belief and assurance.<sup>63]</sup>** Footnote reference: Augustine, *City of God* 7.17. In *On the Latin Language* 5.10.57–74, Marcus Terentius Varro explains the naming of the gods. He discusses names related to sky, earth, fire, water, male, and female. In *City of God* Augustine rebukes Varro: 'Varro himself preferred to be sceptical about everything.... Thus he renders uncertain not only what he says about the uncertain gods, but also what he says about the certain gods.' Augustine's criticisms are expanded in *City of God* 3.4, 17; 4.31–2; 6.2.

**70.37 A heathen poet... believe it.<sup>64]</sup>** Footnote reference: Claudio Rutilius Namatianus, *Itinerarium* 1, lines 387–94. (For this title, see Cat., p. 269. The title is translated in the Loeb edn. as *A Voyage Home to Gaul*.) Rutilius writes: 'We pay the abuse due to the filthy race that infamously practices circumcision: a root of silliness they are: chill Sabbaths are after their own heart, yet their heart is chillier than their creed. Each seventh day is condemned to ignoble sloth, as 'twere an effeminate picture of a god fatigued. The other wild ravings from their lying bazaar methinks not even a child in his sleep could believe.' Rutilius is speaking of Jews, which he mentions by name (*Judeus*); Hume's use of 'religious system' therefore may refer to the foundations of Christianity in Judaism.

Hume gives the title of Rutilius' work as 'iter'. The title on the edition he used would likely have been *Itinerarium*, meaning roughly 'Of the Journeys', though the work was also published under other titles (*De redito suo* and *De reditu suo itinerarium*).

**71.6 SPARTIAN... genitalia.<sup>65]</sup>** Footnote reference: Spartian, *Life of Hadrian* 14.2. The Latin may be translated as 'It was at this time also that the Jews started a war, because they were not being permitted to mutilate their genitals' (i.e. circumcision was forbidden). According to Dio Cassius—probably a more reliable authority on this subject than Spartian—the beginning of the war was caused by the Jews' vexation over the transplantation of an alien religion into their city and

the dedication of a temple to Jupiter Capitolinus on the site of the Jewish Temple of Jehovah (*Roman History* 69.12).

**71.14 imputation of deism**] Hume once noted that the ‘cry of Deism’ was brought against him when he was placed in candidacy as library-keeper to the Faculty of Advocates (4 Feb. 1752, to John Clephane, *Letters*, 1: 165; see also the letter of Mar. 1755, to William Strahan, *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 29 (1991)). ‘Deism’ is briefly mentioned in Hume’s *Dialogues* 1.19.

**71.15 wife TERENTIA . . . his health.<sup>66</sup>**] Footnote reference: Cicero, *Epistulae ad familiares* [*The Letters to His Friends*] 14, ep. 7.1. In his letter (of 49 BC) to his wife Terentia<sup>B</sup> and cherished daughter Tullia, Cicero depicts undiluted bile as the cause of his ill health. After he quickly recovered, he fancied that some god had ‘doctored him’. He asked Terentia and Tullia to pay tribute in their praise and worship to Apollo and Aesculapius. For pertinent texts that express Cicero’s views on religion, freedom of belief, and the philosophical theologies of his predecessors, see *De natura deorum*, esp. 1.1–14, and *De divinatione* (and annotations immediately below). In general, Cicero seems opposed to superstition rather than religion.

**71.19 POMPEY’s devotion . . . to auguries, dreams, and prophesies.<sup>67</sup>**] Footnote reference: Cicero, *De divinatione* 2.9.24; and see also 1.14.24–6. Hume’s condensed reference (in the original) to Cicero—de Divin. lib. 2 c. 24—may be a reference, in common modern numbering, to 2.24 (or 2.9.24 in full numbering). This chapter mentions Pompey in the following context: ‘Assuming that men knew the future it cannot in any wise be said—certainly not by the Stoics—that Pompey would not have taken up arms, that Crassus would not have crossed the Euphrates, or that Caesar would not have embarked upon the civil war. If so, then, the deaths that befell these men were not determined by Fate.’ This passage is not precisely on Hume’s topic, and does not discuss Pompey’s devotion to auguries or whether his devotion was more sincere than Cicero’s (as Hume states). However, *De divinatione* 1.14.24–6 also contains relevant material, and other passages in bk. 2—e.g. 36–7 (§§76–9) and 47 (§99)—help support the interpretation that Pompey was associated with soothsayers, trusted auguries, and the like. At one point, Quintus says to Cicero, ‘Indeed how trustworthy were the auspices taken when you were augur!’ (1.15.25). These passages suggest that Pompey trusted auguries, but not that his trust was more robust than Cicero’s.

**71.21 reported of MILTON**] The report was made by Milton’s nephew, pupil, and translator, Edward Phillips,<sup>B</sup> in ‘The Life of Mr. John Milton’, published in 1694. Phillips says of Milton ‘That his Vein never happily flow’d, but from the Autumnal Equinoctial to the Vernal, and that whatever he attempted was never to his satisfaction’ (*Letters of State*, p. xxxvi; cf. *Complete Poems and Major Prose*, p. 1035).

**71.23 AUGUSTUS . . . left foot.<sup>68</sup>**] Footnote references: Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars* 2, ‘Augustus’ 90–2; Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 2.5.24 (2.7 in older edns.). Suetonius reports that Augustus was superstitious, and took preventive

measures to guard himself against the unusual and unknown. He was sensitive to thunder and lightning, and scrutinized his dreams. Suetonius adds that 'All through the spring his own dreams were very numerous and fearful, but idle and unfulfilled; during the rest of the year they were less frequent and more reliable'. Suetonius notes that Augustus regarded certain events as infallible omens: e.g. if he put his shoes on the wrong feet, he considered this action a bad sign. Pliny observes that some people venerate or fear fortune more than the divine. He points to Augustus as representative of this tendency, and recounts that Augustus told a story about how, on the day his army almost mutinied, he had put his left boot on the wrong foot.

**72.1 implicit faith . . . disbelief and conviction]** For other uses of the common expression 'implicit faith' in Hume's writings, see *Letters*, 1: 473 (to Gilbert Elliot of Minto); *History of England* (chs. 4, 40 [1: 188; 4: 152]); *THN* 1.4.2.56; 'Of Parties in General' 13; and 'Of National Characters', n. 2. For related philosophical and theological uses of the notion, see Hobbes, *Leviathan* 32.2; Locke, *Essay* 1.4.22; 2.33.17; 4.12.6; 4.17.4; François de la Mothe Le Vayer (1588–1672; French man of letters), *De la vertu des payens*, 'De Pyrrhon' (p. 298); Toland, *Christianity not Mysterious* 2.1 (p. 35); and Chambers, *Cyclopædia*, 'faith'. See also the use in George Campbell (1719–96; Aberdeen Professor of Divinity) in *A Dissertation on Miracles*, p. 77 (in commenting on Hume).

**73.6 the loves of MARS and VENUS]** Mars (or Ares), the impetuous and quarrelsome god of war and son of Jupiter and Juno, loved Venus (or Aphrodite), goddess of love and beauty, and became the father of her three children. This affair involved deception, as Venus was already married to Hephaestus, who discovered the duplicity and concocted a scheme to trap the two lovers in a hunting-net in his marriage-bed. After netting them, he invited all the gods as his witnesses to the affair. Venus had numerous romances. Some involved tender passion, especially her time with the lovely Adonis. See, further, ann. 38.20 (on *NHR* 2.4), regarding Mars, and ann. 50.7 (on *NHR* 5.4), regarding Mars and Venus.

**73.6 amorous frolics of JUPITER and PAN]** Although married to the jealous Juno, Jupiter had numerous love affairs with both goddesses and mortals. His female loves and the forms of concealment taken to hide from Juno included Danae (shower of gold), Alcmena (the impersonation of her husband), Leda (swan), Io (dark cloud), Callisto (Artemis), Europa (bull), and Antiope (satyr). Each love eventuated in offspring. The story of Io is illustrative: Jupiter assumed the form of a dark cloud to conceal his activities from Juno. When Jupiter sensed Juno's approach, he turned Io into a heifer, but Juno asked for the heifer as a gift. To avoid suspicion, Jupiter agreed, thereby initiating a series of attempts to conceal her identity and restore her true form. (See, further, on Jupiter's power and role, ann. 45.26 and 54.24, on *NHR* 4.5 and 6.8.)

Pan, the god of wood and fields, flocks and shepherds, enjoyed the dances and revels of the nymphs, several of whom he seduced. In a story told by Mercury, Pan wooed a chaste nymph named Syrinx. She darted away and called for help from

her friends the water-nymphs near the bank of the river. When Pan put his arms around what he thought to be her form, he found that he had embraced a tuft of reeds. Pan's foremost amorous frolic was the successful seduction of Selene, which he achieved by disguising his black, goat-like appearance with white fleeces.

**73.15 prejudices of education]** See ann. 65.30 (on *NHR* 11.3). The term 'education' is often used by Hume to refer to the imbibing of second-hand opinion, with the consequence that a bias is transmitted or that proper learning is obstructed. See *NHR* 15.1; *THN* 1.3.9.17–19–1.3.10.1; *EHU* 8.11; 9.3; n. 20; 10.15; 12.4; *EPM* 3.36; 5.3–4. Cf. the strongly worded discussion of the 'prejudice of Custom and Education' in Glanvill, *Scepsis scientifica* 16–17; the less strongly worded statement in Robert Boyle (1627–91; English natural philosopher), *Reconcileableness of Reason and Religion* 4 (*Works*, 4: 164); and the more guarded presentation in Locke, *Essay* 1.2.27; 1.3.20; 2.21.69; 4.20.9.

**73.18 spleen]** Plausible meanings here are hatred, malice, and spite.

**n. 69.1 TACITUS]** Footnote reference: Tacitus, *Histories* 1.3. The passage from Tacitus may be translated: 'Besides the various misfortunes that affected human life, there were prodigies in the sky and on the earth, warning thunderbolts, and presages of things to come—joyful, grievous, doubtful, certain. Never has the Roman people been subject to greater devastation, or received more decisive signs, in proof that the gods' concern is not for our safety but for their vengeance.' Tacitus notes that Rome was once devastated by decline in personal virtue, religious observance, and social order, although many examples of virtue and personal strength were present in his age.

**n. 69.4 AUGUSTUS's quarrel with NEPTUNE]** See ann. 46.6 (on *NHR* 4.6, on 'AUGUSTUS . . . forbad NEPTUNE').

**n. 69.8 QUINTILIAN's exclamation, on account of the death of his children]** Footnote reference: Quintilian, *Institutes* 6, preface. Quintilian laments the loss of his wife and two sons. Although he blames fortune for the deaths and for his partial loss of the will to live, he reports that this twist of fortune instilled a powerful motivation to continue his life's work. Several of Quintilian's references to fortune involve impiety, whereas other references express a belief in the decrees of fate.

**73.26 LUCIAN tells us expressly,<sup>70</sup>]** Footnote reference: Lucian, *Lover of Lies [Philopseudes]* 3. Lucian cites religious beliefs of the Cretans, the Athenians, and the Thebans as examples of foolishly entertained falsehoods. Belief in these lies is so pervasive, he suggests, that those who do not believe them are subject to ridicule by their peers.

**73.31 Livy<sup>71</sup> . . . incredulity of his age]** Footnote reference: Livy, *History* 10.40. In bks. 3 and 10 of this history, Livy refers to the religiousness of former times. In bk. 10, which alone is mentioned by Hume, the story is told of a young man solemnly considering a dispute over a day's chicken omens. Livy observes that the youth had been born in an age before it was popular to make light of the gods.

In *History* 3.20.5–6, Livy contrasts previous attitudes of respect for the gods with modern attitudes, in which persons hold the gods in contempt and use oaths and laws for personal benefit.

**74.3 STOICS . . . sage]** For relevant comments on the ideal wise person or sage, see Seneca, esp. ‘On Tranquillity of Mind’ 2.4 (in *Moral Essays*), and Epicurus (*Epicurus Reader*, texts 3.85–7; 4.128–31; 9; 16.53). For more on Hume’s views, see *EHU* 5.1; *EPM* 7.16; and ‘The Stoic’ 5, 12–13, 18.

**74.6 nothing can be more pitiful . . . religious matters]** Stoicism provided many moral and religious guidelines, and offered a robust view of divine providence. While objecting to superstition and anthropomorphism, the Stoics restructured the traditional gods as powers of nature, and treated traditional legends as parables imparting truths about nature. For critical comments by Hume on the Stoics and religion, see ann. 48.26 (on *NHR* 4.14); *NHR* n. 75; and ‘The Stoic’.

**74.10 PANÆTIUS . . . auguries and divinations.<sup>72</sup>**] Footnote reference: Cicero, *De divinatione* 1.3.6; 1.7. Panaetius wrote on the subject of divine providence. He was praised by Cicero, who reports that Panaetius differed with other Stoics on several central issues about divination, including those involving omens, prophecy, and astrology. Cicero comments that ‘Panaetius . . . dared not say that there was no efficacy in divination, yet he did say that he was in doubt’ (1.3.6). Cicero also reports (subsequent to the passages Hume cites) that Panaetius ‘was the only one of the Stoics to reject the prophecies of the astrologers’ (*De divinatione* 2.42.88). Cicero acknowledges that his treatment in *De divinatione* 2.41–7 derives from Panaetius.

**74.12 MARCUS ANTONINUS<sup>73</sup> . . . admonitions from the gods in his sleep]** Footnote reference: Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations with Himself* 1.17.8. (This title is translated *The Communings with Himself* in the Loeb edn.) Marcus Aurelius succeeded as emperor under the name Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. He is referred to by Hume here (but not elsewhere), as Marcus Antoninus. Like Epictetus, he maintained a Stoicism that provided for a close relation between the human and the divine. The passage cited in n. 73 contains this sentiment, and includes a description of certain remedies that were given or suggested in dreams. Marcus regarded loyalty to the imperial religion as a duty to the state. *Meditations with Himself* 7.54 and 10.1, 6 express similar views.

**74.13 EPICTETUS<sup>74</sup> . . . nowise concern us]** Footnote reference: Epictetus, *The Manual (Encheiridion)* 18. (Hume refers to ch. 17, the appropriate number in his edition; see Catalogue of Hume’s References.) Epictetus, as presented by Arrian, held that God has given to all persons the means to become happy, but that life’s events, including its disappointments and hardships, are expressions of the will of God. The chief matter is to have right opinions about the gods, and then to obey them. In ch. 18, Epictetus discusses the faint croak of a raven and how to interpret omens. The suggestion is made that one need not interpret a message as applying

to one's *person*, but rather as it pertains to one's body, one's estate, one's wife, and the like.

**74.17 philosophical enthusiasm]** Elsewhere Hume mentions philosophers other than the Stoics when discussing philosophical enthusiasm and religious superstition. In *EPM*, 'A Dialogue', at its conclusion, Hume speaks of a philosophical enthusiasm such as that found in Diogenes of Sinope (4th century BC; Greek philosopher). When revising the *Treatise* to 'give as little Offence as possible', Hume reported that 'I was resolv'd not to be an Enthusiast, in Philosophy, while I was blaming other Enthusiasms' (2 Dec. 1737, to Henry Home, *New Letters*, 3).

For his comments on enthusiasm generally, see *EPM* 3.7; 3.24; 'Of Superstition and Enthusiasm' 3, 6–8; *Dialogues* 12; and *History of England*, chs. 40, 55, 57–62. In the latter, he writes that 'All enthusiasts, indulging themselves in rapturous flights, extasies, visions, inspirations, have a natural aversion to episcopal authority, to ceremonies, rites, and forms, which they denominate superstition, or beggarly elements, and which seem to restrain the liberal effusions of their zeal and devotion' (ch. 40 [4: 123]).

Commentary in the eighteenth century concentrated on religious enthusiasm. Trenchard defines 'enthusiasm' as quoted above, at ann. 53.11 (on *NHR* 6.3). Publications and sermons that cautioned about the follies of enthusiasm, understood as forceful but misguided pretence to inspiration, were common before and during Hume's lifetime. In his influential *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, Henry More called for reliance on reason and the development of a criterion to distinguish genuine from false inspiration in religion. Sect. 42 of this work treats 'Philosophical Enthusiasm'; see also sects. 1–8, 18–24, 28–32, 48–51, 55–61, 67. See also Locke's chapter 'Of Enthusiasm' (*Essay* 4.19).

**74.20 PLATO<sup>76</sup>... SOCRATES... rejecting such fables]** Footnote reference: Plato, *Euthyphro* 6A–D. Euthyphro observes that Zeus, who was believed to be 'the best and most just of the gods', prosecuted his own father. Socrates asks, 'Is not this, Euthyphro, the reason why I am being prosecuted, because when people tell such stories about the gods I find it hard to accept them?'

**74.23 subsequent dialogue,<sup>77</sup>... mortality of the soul]** Footnote reference: Plato, *Phaedo* 64A–65A, 68B–D, 70A–B, 80D–E. Socrates comments: 'We believe, do we not, that death is the separation of the soul from the body' (64C). Faced with the question whether the soul lives after this separation, as some believed, Socrates avoids giving a direct answer. Cebes asserts, in response to Socrates, that 'men are very prone to disbelief' about immortality (70A).

**n. 78.1–6 XENOPHON'S conduct... ex edit. Leuncl.]** Footnote references: Xenophon, *Opera*, trans. Joannes Leunclavius (1625 edn.). *Anabasis*: (1) bk. 3, ch. 1, §§5–8; (2) bk. 3, ch. 1, §§11–14; (3) bk. 3, ch. 2, §9; (4) bk. 4, ch. 3, §§8–9; (5) bk. 4, ch. 5, §§3–4; (6) bk. 5, ch. 6, §§16–17; (7) bk. 5, ch. 6, §29; (8) bk. 6, ch. 1, §§19–24; (9) bk. 6, ch. 6, §36; (10) bk. 6, ch. 1, §§22–4; (11) bk. 6, ch. 2, §2; (12) bk. 6, ch. 4, §§12–22; (13) bk. 7, ch. 8, §§1–3. 'Ways and Means', 6.2–3. *Memorabilia*,

*passim*. All page numbers given by Hume in n. 78 refer to the standardized numbers in the Leunclavius edn. Hume's original references were mistaken in two cases, both corrected in the present edn.: He listed p. 273 for what is either 372 or 373 or both; and after the 1st edn. an error was introduced when 932 was changed to 392 (and retained in all subsequent edns.). Hume here mentions the *Memorabilia* without listing specific pages or passages. He may be referring to passages such as that found in bk. 4, ch. 8, where Xenophon defends Socrates against charges that he was deluded to think that he had been divinely forewarned about his death. Xenophon's defence ignores Socrates' apparent claim to have been visited by a deity. In his essay 'Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations', n. 115, Hume praises the *Anabasis* as one of 'the two most authentic pieces of all Greek history', the other being Demosthenes' orations.

n. 78.18 **the Exta]** the bowels or entrails (organs in the abdominal cavity) of the victim sacrificed, which soothsayers used as the basis of auguries.

n. 78.26 **NEWTON]** On the nature of the Socinian and Arian 'heresies', see ann. 66.18 (on *NHR* 11.4). These labels were used to imply atheism, free-thinking, or unorthodox appeals, no less than heresy. Newton challenged orthodox interpretations of the Trinity and exhibited an acquaintance with Arian and Socinian writings. Although he maintained secrecy about his views so far as possible during his lifetime, Newton's work on 'the corruption of two texts of scripture' was revealing. He argued that passages in 1 John and 1 Timothy that had been used as a scriptural basis of the Trinitarian doctrine are corrupt texts. Newton explained his ideas in a letter of Nov. 1690 (*Correspondence*, 3: 129–44). He does not specifically propound the essentials of a Unitarian theology or explicitly commit himself to Arianism or Socinianism, but he concludes that the trinitarian corruptions of the scripture occurred in the fourth century while the Arian controversy persisted. He also finds that 'Catholicks are here found much more guilty of these corruptions than the hereticks' (*Correspondence*, 3: 138).

William Whiston (1667–1752), Newton's friend and successor at Cambridge in the Mathematical Chair (Lucasian Professor), resisted the label Arian, but it became difficult to escape, and he was, as a result, relieved of his university chair. It became increasingly difficult to protect Newton against the charge of Arianism, inasmuch as Whiston had publicly aligned his views with Newton's. In *A Collection of Authentick Records Belonging to the Old and New Testament*, Whiston commented on the 'pretended Arian Heresy' for which he was 'Banished and Persecuted'. He maintained that he had been banished for 'the very same Christian Doctrines which the great Sir I. N. had discovered and embraced many Years before me' (2: 1080).

n. 78.26 **LOCKE]** Locke was labelled a Socinian (and deist) shortly after publication of his *Essay*. In his formulations of basic Christian doctrines, the Trinity does not appear to be essential. He maintains that 'Son of God' in the gospels stands for *Messiah*, and that the fundamentals of Christian belief are that there is one supreme creator God, that Jesus is the Messiah, and that obedience is owed to the laws of

God, as transmitted through Jesus. Locke notes that the first of these fundamentals is shared with Judaism, whereas the other two express the new covenant.

Innumerable publications pertaining to Locke's Socinianism, Arianism, and deism had been issued by the time Hume wrote *NHR*. Edward Stillingfleet (1635–99; English theologian and bishop of Worcester) and John Edwards (1637–1716; Calvinistic divine) attacked Locke in prominent exchanges, on grounds that he compromised the doctrine of the Trinity. Edwards accused Locke of Socinianism in 1695 in the first published work to advance the charge (*Some Thoughts concerning the Several Causes and Occasions of Atheism*, which criticized Locke's *The Reasonableness of Christianity*). Locke replied with *A Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity, &c. from Mr. Edwards's Reflections* (1695), and Edwards responded in 1696 with *Socinianism Unmask'd*. Locke then published *A Second Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity, &c.* in 1697 (the same year in which Stillingfleet criticized Locke). In both works Locke protested Edwards's line of interpretation, and denied in firm and caustic terms that he was a Socinian: 'Socinianism then is not the fault of the book, whatever else it be. For I repeat it again, there is not one word of socinianism in it' (*A Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity*, 7: 167).

Nonetheless, Edwards's attack was influential, and Locke was regarded as a Socinian by diverse interpreters for many years thereafter (see John C. Higgins-Biddle (ed.), Locke, *Reasonableness of Christianity*, introduction, pp. xlii ff.). For example, John Milner devoted Part 2 of his *An Account of Mr. Lock's Religion* (1700) to the question of 'whether Socinianism be justly Charged upon Mr. Lock' (title-page). Noting Locke's rejection of the charge, Milner decided to leave the answer to his question to the reader, but came to the firm conclusion that 'when he alledges any place where Christ is said or confess'd to be the Son of God, he interprets it of his being the Messiah' (pp. 183–4).

n. 78.26 CLARKE] Two years after Whiston was stripped of his chair, Samuel Clarke, a friend of both Newton and Whiston, published *The Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity* (1712). He declared the Athanasian Creed to be unscriptural, a conclusion he reached by analysing more than 1,250 texts of the New Testament pertaining to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He determined that only 'God' and 'Father' are used synonymously. Clarke argued that the Father alone is self-existent, underived, unoriginated, and independent; the Son is divine only in so far as divinity is derivative from the Father, and the Holy Spirit is subordinate in both dominion and authority. Issues surrounding Arian and Socinian ideas are discussed by Clarke throughout *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity* (see esp. pt. 2, §§ 2, 5, 9–12, 14, 18, 23, 34–43). He argues that many theological notions are compatible with Arianism, and that some theologians have fallen into Sabellianism or Socinianism (Clarke seems to equate the two) by being too eager to avoid Arian errors.

Clarke's work was sternly criticized as Arian and Latitudinarian. He was arraigned before the Lower House of Convocation, where he was condemned in 1714 for assertions about the doctrine of three persons that were contrary to the

faith, as received by the Reformed Church of England. A partial recantation that mentioned the need to avoid heresy saved him from condemnation by the Upper House. These events embroiled him in trinitarian controversies for the remainder of his life.

**75.3 doctrine of a future state]** The connection between providence and a future state (immortality) had been treated by many writers of Hume's period. The two topics are ostensibly treated together in *EHU* 11. For Hume's views on the possibility of a future state, see his essay 'Of the Immortality of the Soul' 11, where he writes that, 'if any purpose of nature be clear, we may affirm, that the whole scope and intention of man's creation, so far as we can judge by natural reason, is limited to the present life'. In *Dialogues* 12.10, Hume has his characters debate the proposition that 'a future state is so strong and necessary a security to morals, that we never ought to abandon or neglect it'.

**75.3 give any attention.<sup>79</sup>]** Footnote reference: Cicero, *Pro Caelio* 61.171. In this 'Defence of Cluentius', Cicero comments that death for a scoundrel might be a gift, relieving a misery more painful than death. Death has not done the person harm 'unless perhaps we are led by silly stories to suppose that he is enduring the torments of the damned in the nether world'.

**75.4 SALLUST<sup>80</sup> . . . CÆSAR . . . same language in the open senate]** Footnote reference: Sallust, *War with Catiline* 51.20. Sallust writes about an oration of Caesar before the Senate in which he portrayed death as putting 'an end to all mortal ills' and as leaving 'no room either for sorrow or for joy'. Caesar notes that death in certain circumstances of grief and wretchedness is a relief. There is no specific mention of a future state.

**n. 81.1 CICERO . . . SENECA . . . JUVENAL . . . accounts of a future state]** Footnote references: Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.5–6; Seneca, *Ad Lucilium epistulae Morales* 24 ('On Despising Death', esp. §18); Juvenal, *Satires* 2, esp. lines 149–52. In *Tusculan Disputations*, the figures *A* and *M* discuss whether death is wretched. Stories such as that of the three-headed Cerberus in the lower world are recounted. *A* asserts that he is not so deranged as to believe these stories and does not understand why philosophers treat them at length. Seneca's epistle 'On Despising Death' also discusses the foolishness exhibited by Epicurus when harping upon tales of the world below, such as those of Cerberus. Seneca maintains that the fear of death can be conquered, although he refuses to agree that 'the terrors of the world below are idle'. Juvenal asserts that even most boys do not believe in these tales.

**n. 81.3 LUCRETIUS . . . his master]** The mention of Lucretius exalting his master (Epicurus) is an allusion to *De rerum natura* 1 (lines 62–79) and possibly 2 (lines 55–61).

**n. 81.4 CEPHALUS in PLATO . . . became old and infirm]** Footnote reference: Plato, *Republic* 1, 330D–331A. Cephalus is presented as an older man who realizes that, as one draws nearer death, new fears and cares enter the mind. He expresses

concern that there might be truth in the tales of a world below and punishment for deeds done in this life.

**75.9 chief business of the sceptical philosophers . . . artifice of COTTA**] In *De natura deorum* 3.17–20 (see also 1.6.15–1.7.17; 3.8.20–1), Cicero presents Gaius Aurelius Cotta as a proponent of the Academic school who criticizes other theologies as worthless or fatal to religion. ‘Artifice’ here refers to a manœuvre or device of debate—a ‘method of reasoning’—that is rhetorically skilful, but not necessarily a proper means for reaching truth. It is a device used to prove that the gods do not exist (or, possibly, if they do exist, that they are not just). Cotta starts with major deities in the pantheon such as Jupiter and Neptune, and argues that if they are gods, then their relatives must also be gods. If these relatives are gods, then their relatives too must be gods. Cotta then proceeds to discuss the lowest deities, who were not commonly accepted as authentic by learned persons. He argues that if one rejects the lower deities, one must reject the higher as well. See the annotation immediately below.

**75.16 CARNEADES . . . method of reasoning.<sup>82]</sup>**] Footnote reference: Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Physicists* 1.182–90 (alternatively, and commonly, cited as *Adversus mathematicos* 9.182–90). Hume cites *Adversus mathematicos*, bk. 8; but by both traditional and contemporary standards, his bk. nos. for Sextus are incorrect. An explanation of the problem is provided in ann. on *NHR* n. 28. Carneades’ reasoning, which is closely related to the artifice of Cotta, is described by Sextus: ‘If Zeus is a God, . . . Poseidon also, being his brother, will be a God. And if Poseidon is a God, Achelous, too, will be a God; and if Achelous, Neilos; and if Neilos, every river as well; and if every river, the streams also will be Gods; and if the streams, the torrents; but the streams are not Gods; neither, then, is Zeus a God. But if there had been Gods, Zeus would have been a God. Therefore, there are no Gods.’ Sextus reports that Carneades propounds other arguments of the same form. Cicero discusses Carneades’ objectives in the parts of *De natura deorum* 3.17.43 ff. mentioned in the previous annotation: ‘These arguments were advanced by Carneades, not with the object of establishing atheism, . . . but in order to prove the Stoic theology worthless.’

**75.19 scholastic one**] See ann. 66.23 (on *NHR* 11.5), regarding scholastic religion.

### SECTION 13: Impious Conceptions of the Divine Nature in Popular Religions of Both Kinds

**77.1 primary religion . . . from an anxious fear of future events**] See anns. 38.16 and 39.4 (on *NHR* 2.4 and 2.5, on the role of hopes, fears, and terror).

**78.5 XENOPHON,<sup>83</sup> in praise of SOCRATES**] Footnote reference: Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.1.19. Xenophon presents Socrates as differing from his contemporaries in asserting that the gods are omniscient, ubiquitous, and communicative with humans.

78.9 strain of philosophy<sup>84</sup> much above the conception of his countrymen] Footnote reference: Lucian, *Hermotimus* 81. Lucian does not discuss Socrates' view of the gods as a strain of philosophy above his countrymen's conception (see the previous annotation), but he does discuss the hypothesis that the gods are ubiquitous. Lycinus the Sceptic tells a story of a boy in philosophical training who spoke of God as not being in heaven, but as pervading everything. The view was commonly considered laughable.

78.12 HERODOTUS...envy to the gods] For a passage in Herodotus that attributes envy to the gods, see *History* 7.46: 'The god is seen to be envious therein, after he has given us but a taste of the sweetness of living.' A similar ascription is found in *History* 1.32.

78.16 TIMOTHEUS...hymn to DIANA...celebrate.<sup>85</sup>] Footnote reference: Plutarch, *Moralia*, 'On Superstition' 10, 170A–B. Plutarch reports that Timotheus, in the song (or hymn) sung at Athens, called Artemis (Diana to the Romans) an 'ecstatic Bacchic frantic fanatic'. The song-writer Cinesias then stood up and exclaimed, 'May you have a daughter like that'. Plutarch submits that the superstitious tremble at and dread the gods.

79.8 LUCIAN<sup>86</sup> observes, that a young man, who reads the history of the gods] Footnote reference: Lucian, *Menippus, or the Descent into Hades* 3. In this dialogue, Menippus discusses his decision to descend into the underworld:

While I was a boy, when I read Homer and Hesiod about wars and quarrels, not only of the demigods but of the gods themselves, ... I thought that all these things were right. ... But when I came of age, I found that the laws contradicted the poets and forbade adultery, quarrelling, and theft. So I was plunged into great uncertainty, ... for the gods would never have committed adultery and quarrelled with each other, I thought, unless they deemed these actions right, and the lawgivers would not recommend the opposite course unless they supposed it to be advantageous.

n. 87.8 no enemy to CHRISTIANITY...the Chevalier RAMSAY] Footnote reference: Andrew Michael Ramsay, *Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion*, 2: 403–6. (Hume mistranscribed or altered several features of Ramsay's text. However, no item deprived Ramsay's text of its sense or made an unintelligible formal error. See n. 6 in the Editorial Appendix to this volume, p. 177.)

Ramsay's ambitious two-volume work was, he said, an attempt to establish two primary theses:

[1] That the great principles of *Natural Religion* are founded upon the most invincible evidence; and that the essential doctrines of *Revealed Religion* are perfectly conformable to *Reason*. . . .

[2] That vestiges of all the principal doctrines of the Christian religion are to be found in the monuments, writings, or mythologies of all nations, ages, and religions; and that these vestiges are emanations of the primitive, antient, universal religion of mankind, transmitted from the beginning of the world by the Antidiluvians to the Postdiluvian

patriarchs, and by them to their posterity that peopled the face of the earth. (*Philosophical Principles*, 1: iv–v)

In the preface to his other major work, *Travels of Cyrus*, Ramsay says that he intends to prove ‘two principal points’:

The first is to prove against the Atheists the existence of a supreme Deity, . . . [and] to shew that the earliest [theological] opinions of the most knowing and civiliz'd nations come nearer the truth than those of latter ages. . . . The second point is to shew, in opposition to the Deists, that the principal doctrines of reveal'd religion, concerning the states of innocence, corruption and renovation, are as ancient as the world. (*Travels of Cyrus*, 1: xvii–xix)

Hume’s estimate of Ramsay’s views is given in more than one item of correspondence. See esp. his letter of 26 Aug. 1737, to Michael Ramsay, in T. Kozanecki, ‘Dawida Hume’s nieznane listy w zbiorach Muzeum Czartoryskich [Polska]’.

n. 87.10 **doctrines which freethinkers scruple]** Bayle, Shaftesbury, Collins, Toland, and Charles Blount were principal free-thinkers. Des Maizeaux, Bayle’s intellectual heir, may have been viewed by Hume as a promoter of free-thinking. The term itself had gained notoriety from Collins’s *Discourse of Free-Thinking* (1713). It was applied to deists as well as heretics and atheists. Religious free-thinking was attacked by Richard Bentley (1662–1742; English classical scholar and Master of Trinity College, Cambridge), *Remarks Upon a Late Discourse of Free-Thinking*; Jonathan Swift (1667–1745; Anglo-Irish poet and satirist, dean of St Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin), *Mr. C——n’s Discourse of Free-Thinking* (esp. pp. 3–19); and Benjamin Hoadly (1676–1761; English bishop and pamphleteer), *Queries Recommended to the Authors of the late Discourse of Free-Thinking*. Berkeley, who disapproved of Collins, attacked free-thinking in contributions to the *Guardian* and in *Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*; later he used these materials as a basis for a criticism of free-thinking in *Alciphron* 1. Related issues arose in France, often as a result of clandestine philosophical literature; see John S. Spink, *French Free-Thought from Gassendi to Voltaire*, and Ira O. Wade, *The Clandestine Organization and Diffusion of Philosophic Ideas in France from 1700 to 1750*.

n. 87.15 **pharisaical]** like the Pharisees in being rigid and strict in doctrine and ritual, emphasizing outward displays of religion; hypocritical.

n. 87.60 **Arminian and Molinist schemes]** Arminianism was initially formulated c. 1610 by the Protestant clerical followers of Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609; Dutch Reformed theologian, properly Jakob Hermandszoon). Arminian theology teaches that Calvinist theories of predestination, irresistible grace, and election are false. Adherents, including Hugo Grotius, emphasize human free will and hold that grace is won by human co-operation and can be lost. God is said to have foreknowledge of all human sin, but neither to will nor to predestine the sin. Various Protestant groups were widely regarded as Arminian in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Molinism derives from the theology of Luis de Molina (1535–1600; Spanish Jesuit theologian). His theological reflections on divine grace and human free will

were controversial, and stimulated a response from the Dominicans. There ensued a protracted conflict between the two orders. Molinism attempted to reconcile human free will with doctrines of divine grace, providence, prerogative, and foreknowledge. Molinists held that God has comprehensive foreknowledge, but that grace is made effective by the assent of the recipient's will.

Ramsay touches only briefly on the two theologies mentioned by Hume. He maintains that they misunderstand human freedom: 'The Molinist, Arminian and mitigated scheme about prescience leads to fatality, and is destructive of liberty, as well as that of the Thomists, Jansenists, and predestinarians' (*Philosophical Principles*, 1: 175).

Hume devotes parts of ch. 46, the Appendix to the Reign of James I, and ch. 51 of his *History of England* to the topic of 'Arminianism'. He discusses (1) 'Vorstius, the disciple of Arminius', who was burned by the king as a heretic 'for his blasphemies and atheism'; (2) the social reception of Arminianism in Britain; and (3) the impact of the fact that James I came 'towards the end of his reign, to favour the milder theology of Arminius' (5: 46, 131).

n. 87.62 a kind of ORIGENISM] Ramsay rejects central doctrines in virtually every major school or system of theology, including Origenism, Molinism, and Arminianism. 'Origenism' should probably be understood here, in light of Hume's comments, as (1) a cosmology of the 'pre-existence of the souls of men and beasts', (2) an interpretation of the nature of the voluntary fall of both angels and humans, and (3) a theology of divine transformation and restoration. From this perspective, Ramsay could be said to defend 'a kind of Origenism': He shares some of Origen's beliefs regarding the fall of the angels, the pre-existent souls of humans and their redemption, Adam's transgression, and human freedom. Ramsay also shares with Origen the conviction that Christian belief was compatible with Greek pagan belief and philosophical thought. In addition, Ramsay quotes a lengthy passage from Origen's *Contra Celsum* on 'the truly wise in all religions' (*Philosophical Principles*, 2: 55).

However, Ramsay also rejects many doctrines in Origenism, even within the slice of the theory he retains. For example, he rejects critical features of the 'Origenian sense' of the nature and condition of the pre-existent souls and of restitution. He condemns this Origenist thesis as an 'absurd system' that destroys 'articles of faith' (*Philosophical Principles*, 2: 245, and appendix on 'the condemnation of Origen'). In the preface to *Travels of Cyrus* (1: xxii), Ramsay considers accusations by his critics that he follows Origen: 'The Author introduces in his last book two persons of very different characters, a Philosopher and a Prophet; the one employs the powers of reason against incredulity, the other imposes silence on all reasonings by a supernatural authority. This is the only use which the Author would make of the opinions of Origen.'

80.6 "Sunt superis sua jura."<sup>88</sup>] Footnote reference: Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 9, line 500. Ovid observes that the gods have been incestuous, and then offers the

statement quoted by Hume, which means ‘but the gods are a law unto themselves’. It is thus futile, Ovid says, to compare human and divine customs.

#### SECTION 14: Bad Influence of Popular Religions on Morality

**81.0 Bad Influence of Popular Religions on Morality]** James Boswell (1740–95; Scottish man of letters) reported that Hume said on his deathbed that ‘the morality of every religion was bad’ (*Boswell in Extremes*, 1776–1778, p. 11). However, questions have been raised about Boswell’s report. On the reliability of the story, see Schwartz, ‘Boswell and Hume: The Deathbed Interview’.

Hume’s comments on the monkish virtues at *NHR* 10.2 and *EPM* 9.3 have been widely quoted, and he elsewhere offers sundry observations on the bad influence of religion on morality: e.g. see *Dialogues* 12.12 on ‘the proper office of religion’.

**81.8 the Sadder]** The *Sadder* (or *Saddar*, *Sad Dar*, or *Sad-der*) sets forth the religious precepts of Zoroaster. The name ‘Sadder’ refers to ‘a hundred subjects’, or topics—called doors—that treat a variety of religious duties, practices, penalties, rituals, and explanations. Each section provides a separate, elementary guidance in religious understanding and observation. For example, the text covers, in five of its 100 sections, the necessity of unwavering faith in the religion, the prohibition of sin, the nature of good works, why high-priests must be obeyed, and reasons for wearing the sacred thread-girdle. In nn. 39 and 46 (see anns. above), Hume cites as his source of information Thomas Hyde, *Historia religionis veterum Persarum . . . Atque Magorum liber Sad-der*. The title of the *Sadder* in Hyde is *The Sadder book of the Magians, Containing the Precepts and Canons of Zoroaster: For the use of the Religion of the Magians and of all those Faithful*; however, the *Sadder* is probably a relatively late compilation, well after Magian influence. For Hume’s youthful notes on the *Sadder* in Hyde, see his ‘Early Memoranda’ (§§191–2).

**81.8 the Pentateuch]** the first five books of the Bible, which contain numerous precepts of morality. At *EHU* 10.40 Hume also cites the Pentateuch for its reports of miracles.

**81.15 They only created a dictator,<sup>89</sup> in order to drive a nail]** Footnote reference: Livy, *History* 7.3.3–9. The translation of ‘Dictator clavis figendæ causa’ (n. 89) is ‘the dictator for the driving in of the nail’. Livy reports that ‘The elders recollect that a pestilence had once been allayed by the dictator’s driving a nail. Induced thereto by this superstition, the senate ordered the appointment of a dictator to drive the nail. Lucius Manlius Imperiosus was appointed.’ Livy is likely reporting events in 363 BC. The first act of driving a nail may have occurred under the dictator Quintus Servilius Priscus in 435 BC.

**81.18 In AEGINA . . . HERODOTUS,<sup>90</sup>]** Footnote reference: Herodotus, *History* 6.91. Aegina was a leading commercial state until its eclipse by Athens. Herodotus reports

how a faction of the wealthier Aeginetans defeated a revolt of the common people led by Nicodromus. Hume's recounting of the story of the 'miserable fugitive' closely follows Herodotus.

81.31 **The sublime prologue of ZALEUCUS's laws<sup>91</sup> . . . LOCRIANS]** Footnote reference: Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library* 12.20–21. Zaleucus,<sup>B</sup> the lawgiver in Locri and a student of Pythagoras, won fame for authoring the Locrian Code. According to Diodorus, Zaleucus declared in the Prologue that it is necessary for the inhabitants to accept the view that the gods are responsible for cosmic order and the goods of life, and that citizens should keep their souls untainted by evil because the gods most highly prize just and honourable practices (and not sacrifices or costly gifts).

82.15 **excessive penances of the *Brachmans* and *Talapoins***] 'Brachman', 'brahman' (as it was spelled in the 1757 edn. of *NHR*), 'brachmin', or 'brahmin' refers to the hereditary class of priests and the teachers of the Vedas. They enjoyed high prestige in religious and secular affairs, yet lived austere and solitary lives, sometimes in caves and deserts (living only on herbs, roots, and fruits). They often had poor apparel, were under mandates to abstain from carnal pleasures, and were required to engage in fasts. Vedism or Brahminism dominated parts of the subcontinent of India in the second and first millennium BC. When early Vedism combined with other spiritual movements in India into what is now commonly called Hinduism, traditions of brachmans as priests survived. Several books on brachmans were available in Britain during Hume's lifetime, and many writers on religious subjects punctuated their work with references to brachmans.

Talapoins are Buddhist priests or monks who lead exemplary and devout lives. Well-respected Talapoins go with bare feet and bare heads at all times—and follow rigid standards of temperance and rules of chastity. The most rigorous lived like mendicant friars, partially surviving on gifts from others. European travellers to India, Siam, Burma, and other countries with Buddhist adherents had reported on the Talapoins. Two contributions to the *Guardian* of 1713 mention Talapoins: no. 39, by George Berkeley, and no. 3, by either Richard Steele (1672–1729; Irish essayist) or Berkeley. Both contributions rely on comments on the Talapoins found in Collins, *A Discourse of Free-Thinking*. The contribution in *Guardian* no. 3 gives the following description: 'The Talapoins of Siam have a Book of Scripture written by Sommonocodom, who, the Siamese say, was born of a Virgin, and was the God expected by the Universe' (*Guardian*, ed. Stephens, p. 49); see further, Bayle, *Dictionary*, 'Sommona-Codom'.

Cudworth, a writer Hume had read on matters of religion when making notes in his 'Early Memoranda', mentions a discussion in Strabo of the 'ancient Indian Brachmans' (*True Intellectual System of the Universe* 1.4.32 [1: 504]). Strabo treats Brachmans as one of two groups within the philosopher caste; he gives descriptions of their life-style, course of studies, and role in the state (*Geography* 15.1.39, 59, 61, 66, 70). Thomas Burnet discusses brachmans and even refers to 'Siamese

*Brachmans*' ('Brachmanes Siamenes'). Burnet is presuming a Siamese Empire that assimilated Indian Brachmans. His discussion points to the various understandings of both 'Brachmans' and 'Siamese religion' at work in European discussions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (*Archæologiæ philosophicæ* 1.3 and Appendix, which includes a list of sources).

**82.16 Rhamadan of the TURKS... more severe than the practice of any moral duty]** The Ramadân is the ninth month of the year in the Moslem lunar calendar. It is of sacred value because the Koran (or Qur'ân) was reported to have been revealed during this month. In commemoration of the revelation, the faithful adhere throughout the month to a fast during daylight hours (exempting soldiers and the ill). Drinking, eating, smoking, and marital relations are not permitted during these hours. Acts of observance have merit only if undertaken willingly and are free of self-interest. Intentional breaking of the fast carries penalties. However, the period need not be gloomy or sombre. Ramadân nights can be joyous occasions during which family and friends gather for food, singing, and light entertainment. In the 'Preliminary Discourse' to his *The Koran, Commonly called The Alcoran of Mohammed*, Sale presented a meticulous discussion of the obligation to fast and its roots in 'the express command of the Koran' (sect. 4, p. 112).

**82.20 four Lents of the MOSCOVITES]** See ann. 54.22 (on *NHR* 6.7, on 'Muscovites'). Unlike those Christians who engaged in the practice of Lent once a year, the Muscovites (or Russian Eastern Orthodox) recognized four Lents in which priests played a leading role. Associated with the Lent recognized in the West were the fast of the Assumption of the Virgin or the Lent of the Mother of God, which lasted two weeks, the fast before St Peter's Day or St Peter's Lent, and the fast before Christmas, from 14 November until the night before Christmas. Some travellers reported protracted church services and demanding practices of fasting. English seaman Richard Chancelor reported first-hand on the four fasts of the Muscovites: 'The first beginnes with them, at the time that our Lent beginnes. The second is called amongst them, the fast of S. Peter. The third is taken from the day of the Virgin Marie. And the fourth, and last, beginnes upon S. Philips day. But as we begin our Lent upon Wensday, so they begin theirs upon the Sunday' (in Richard Hakluyt, *The Principall Navigations*, pp. 290–1).

**83.26 BOMILCAR... historian<sup>92</sup> remarks]** Footnote reference: Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library* 20, esp. 43–4. Bomilcar negotiated a treaty between Agathocles and some Sicilian cities. He attempted to exploit a situation created by Agathocles' invasion of Carthage (310–308 bc). Hoping to make himself tyrant in Carthage, Bomilcar attempted a revolution and was supported by approximately 500 confederates and 1,000 mercenaries. However, he received no popular support, and the Carthaginians successfully resisted the attempt. Whether Bomilcar had legitimate grievances or attempted revolution from sheer ambition is uncertain, as is whether he failed in some of his plans because of delays and postponements that he chose out of superstition. Diodorus reports on how the Carthaginians put

down Bomilcar's attempt to become tyrant, and also that Bomilcar was among those who, when acting lawlessly, are superstitious and tend to delay rather than take decisive action.]

**83.31 CATILINE . . . terrors made him seek new inventions of this kind;<sup>93]</sup>** Footnote references: Cicero, *Against Catiline* 1.6.16 and 1.9.24; Sallust, *War with Catiline* 22. Catiline entered into a conspiracy to plunder Rome and assassinate the consuls. Cicero helped foil the plan, assailing Catiline in the Senate and the Forum. Both Cicero and Sallust refer cryptically to religious innovations by Catiline. The clearest example is Sallust's description of Catiline as conducting solemn rites for the purpose of inducing faithfulness and requiring that an oath be taken among the conspirators. One ritual compelled those who participated to taste bowls of human blood mixed with wine.

## SECTION 15: General Corollary

**85.1 stupidity]** incomprehension (from insensitivity or lack of awareness). Cf. the usage at *NHR* 6.1; and *EPM* 6.16 and Appx. 4.3.

**85.20 draughts of life, according to the poet's fiction . . . each hand of JUPITER]** This account is found in Homer, *Iliad* 24, lines 528–33. Two urns are said to stand on the floor of the palace of Zeus, one filled with his allocation of ills (evils) and the other filled with his allocation of blessings (goods). Plato mentions these lines in Homer as he discusses the role of the gods as causes of good and evil (*Republic* 2, 379D–F). At *THN* 1.3.10.5, Hume discusses the thesis that poets 'tho' liars by profession . . . endeavour to give an air of truth to their fictions'.

**85.31 mediocrity]** middle or mean state or condition between two extremes (possibly alluding to Aristotle's doctrine of the mean); middle course in action.

**86.5 universal propensity . . . human nature]** Cf. Hume's Introduction in *NHR* to this passage.

**86.21 sick men's dreams]** possibly an allusion to Horace, *Ars poetica* 1–23, where the same expression appears. Horace's context—comparing idle fancies in books that join disparate elements to 'sick men's dreams'—may be related to Hume's discussion in *THN* 2.2.8.17 and *DP* 4.10–14 on foreign elements inappropriately conjoined.

**87.4 The whole is a riddle, an ænigma, an inexplicable mystery . . . the frailty of human reason]** Cf. the penultimate paragraph in Hume's *Dialogues* and his comment on mysteries at *EHU* 8.36. In *THN* and *EHU*, Hume suggests that human understanding is not fitted for such abstruse subjects. The language of 'mystery' could possibly be an oblique reference to the mysteries of pagan religion, church doctrine about mysteries and revealed truth, philosophical enquiry into the mysteries of religion, and the like. Toland, in addressing such issues in *Christianity not Mysterious*, used the language of mystery beyond reason.